A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRUCTURES AND THEMES IN THE SHORT STORIES OF NADINE GORDIMER

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts

University of Cape Town

for the Degree of Master of Arts

ABSTRACT

Most current studies of Gordimer concern themselves with her novels, and her short stories have not received significant critical attention as stories in their own right, worthy of study both for their structural and formal qualities, and for the contribution they make as social, political and historical comment on their time. This study begins with a general discussion of the artistic demands of the modern short story, and then proceeds to a close study of all Gordimer's published short stories, concentrating on the developments that occur in the characteristic structures and themes of her stories. Each of her collections is dealt with, chronologically, in a separate chapter. In the course of the study, it became clear that two critical approaches were needed in order to explain satisfactorily developments of structure on the one hand, and theme on the other. The basic approach has been close textual reading, which has been enhanced especially after her fifth collection by consideration of the stories' socio-historical dimensions as well. Gordimer's early stories deal with what are later seen to be characteristic themes, race and racial differences, self-deception, illusion, or the stripping away of illusions, turning points in childhood and marriage. Later stories show the developments in these thematic areas, most

notably in the field of race. Other stories reveal a growing interest in the role and position of women, and also a preoccupation with betrayal.

Gordimer's stories are seen as occupying a position firmly within the tradition of the modern short story. Her characteristic treatment of her material results in what this study sees as a typical Gordimer short story structure. The story starts with an introductory passage which presents the necessary background and characterisation, or sets the atmosphere. It then moves into a high focus during which a number of insights or revelations occur, which interact with each other to produce, at a higher level of abstraction, the central or unifying revelation which is the essence of the story. In these early stories, she shows a self-aware and self-regarding concern for questions of form. After Friday's Footprint, she devotes less attention to the formal qualities of stories, and gives more attention to questions of social and political comment. However, she does attempt some stories that could be labelled experimental short fiction, and she constantly explores the limits of the traditional artistic demands of the modern short story. After Not For Publication, she seems to turn her attention more towards longer works in order to find a suitable genre for her material. Her consistent use of critical realism, her special ability to capture the nuances and minutiae of experience and character are well suited to the short story form. This study shows the

extent to which the short story serves as a vehicle for the expression of her perceptions of and interaction with her society as she develops from the pre-liberal to the committed radical writer and commentator on her society and its people.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Geoffrey Haresnape, for all that he did to help me with this work, for his gentle and perceptive criticism and his friendship. I would also like to thank Dorothy Driver and Wendy Woodward. Each in her own way gave me encouragement and support. And special thanks to Fiona Adams who prepared the typescript.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Nadine Gordimer, internationally acclaimed as the pre-eminent South African writer of her time, nevertheless is not accorded much popular recognition within South Africa. Her most prominent works have been her novels, for which she has won such international prizes as the 1971 James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for A Guest of Honour), and as joint winner, the 1974 Booker Prize (for The Conservationist). But it was as a short story writer in the 1950s and 1960s that she gained prominence, winning the 1961 W.H. Smith Prize for her third collection of short stories, Friday's Footprint. She has continued writing short stories, and has had seven collections of short stories published, along with the eight novels. Paradoxically, the short stories have received much less critical attention that her novels - and in general works on her, critics tend to concern themselves primarily with the novels, seeing the short stories as trial runs, or early versions of the situations of her novels.[1] Yet the short stories themselves constitute a fertile area for study, revealing as they do, both considerable virtuosity in the craft and techniques of the short story, and a large body of social and political comment on the times she has lived in. This study offers a systematic critical survey of these stories.

[1] See, for example, Michael Wade, Nadine Gordimer (London: Evans, 1978).

It will be one of the contentions of this study that Gordimer occupies a special place in the tradition of the modern short story. However, the modern short story has not yet been satisfactorily defined, despite many attempts. What seems to be a more worthwhile endeavour than striving for an exclusive definition is to consider the artistic demands that the short story makes.[2] The short story is a form that employs distinctive artistic methods to structure a particular kind of experience or perception. Not every experience is capable of adaptation to the artistic demands of the short story. However, to attempt to formulate the artistic demands of the short story is not the same as trying to find a definition which will cover the range and variety of the corpus of short stories in English. It is a form sui generis, even though attempts to define it have often tried to do so by contraposing it with the novel. The Kenyon Review ran a selection of articles which was entitled "An International Symposium on the Short Story" during issues 30 and 31 (1968 and 1969), in which a number of writers presented their views on the state of the short story. John Wain wrote of the short story, "it defines itself against the novel ... the short story writer does those things that the novelist does not do."[3] He goes on to explain this comment.

[2] I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness for this approach to Michael Chapman's paper delivered to the 1984 AUETSA conference, which is entitled, "The Fiction-Maker: The Short Story in Literary Education."

[3] John Wain, "An International Symposium on the Short Story," The Kenyon Review, 31, (1969), p.82 .

> He (the short story writer) begins, as the novelist begins, by imagining people in a certain situation. But he need not go on until the situation is completely explored. It is enough for him to present the people and situation vividly, to indicate, deftly, some of the possible ways in which they might react to it ... Because the possibilities are to be left undeveloped, because the characters are to be hit off rather than shown in depth, drawn rather than painted, the right economy and lucidity, the detail that reverberates with exactly the required suggestion and no other, must be forthcoming.[4]

Nadine Gordimer, in the same collection of articles, takes a similar line.

> Both novel and story use the same material: human experience. Both have the same aim: to communicate it. Both use the same medium: the written word ... If the short story is alive while the novel is dead, the reason must lie in approach and method.[5]

A more recent study of the short story has a more detailed explanation of the difference.

> Whereas the novel may be seen as a succession of events, incorporating for purposes of verisimilitude, considerable descriptive residue (those apparently fill-in observations and conversations), the short story often aims at the single event with descriptive residue giving way, severely, to metaphor, symbol and the sharp contrasts of opposites. Discussion of the novel usually proceeds most fruitfully by way of a detailed consideration of surface structure (which is syntagmatic and governed by temporal and causal relations); shorter fiction with greater immediacy signals deep structure (paradigmatic and based upon elements -

[4] John Wain, p.84.

[5] Nadine Gordimer, "An International Symposium on the Short Story," The Kenyon Review, 30 (1968), p.458.

> binary oppositions and associations - which are not in themselves narrative).[6]

The following discussion suggests the common basis of critical agreement of the artistic demands of the short story. It is neither exhaustive, nor prescriptive, but it does reflect the core of what is commonly referred to as the 'tradition of the modern short story'. The first demand (which is not a commonplace) is that of brevity and compression. John Wain referred to this above; H E Bates regarded the short story as an art form "in which elaboration and above all explanation are superfluous and tedious"[7]; and he went on to describe it as a form in which "it is no longer necessary to describe; it is enough to suggest".[8] C J Millar makes this point with quotes from Wells, Sean O'Faolain, and John Hatfield,[9] and Nadine Gordimer herself refers to the demand for brevity when she writes in her Introduction to her Selected Stories, "a short story is a concept that the writer can 'hold' fully realised, in his imagination, at one time."[10]

Brevity as a requirement by itself would be an empty criti-

[6] Michael Chapman, "The Fiction-Maker: The Short Story in Literary Education," Paper delivered to the 1984 AUETSA Conference, p.2.

[7] H.E.Bates, The Modern Short Story: A critical Survey (London: Thomas Nelson, 1942), p.21.

[8] H.E.Bates, p.24.

[9] C.J. Millar, , "The Contemporary South African Short Story," MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1962, p.6.

[10] Nadine Gordimer, Selected Stories (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p.14.

cal demand. Brevity has to be the complement of what Edgar Allan Poe called, in one of the earliest commentaries on the modern short story, a "certain unique or single effect."[11] It is the shape of the story that makes it a short story as distinct from a story that happens to be short, and that shape is a direct consequence of the writer's striving to achieve a "unity of effect or impression". One of the most important requirements necessary for that effect is, of course, brevity. Since Poe, many other critics and writers have addressed themselves to the connections between brevity and unity of impression. "Writers from Chekov to H E Bates have accepted these inter-dependent qualities, stressed by Aristotle and Coleridge, of brevity, unity and singleness of effect, as the essence of their art form."[12]

The consequence of this combination - of brevity and "unity of effect or impression" is that constraints are placed on the action, the characterisation and the setting of a short story. The action tends to be compressed into a single scale of time and space. The characters (usually few in number) are revealed, rather than developed and the setting is often implied rather than rendered explicitly. Arising out of these constraints are the further artistic demands that characterise the modern short story.

Characterisation relies in the short story on foreshortening

11 Edgar Allan Poe, Selected Prose and Poetry (New York: Rhinehart and Co.), 1955, p.447.

12 C. J. Millar, p.7.

of character. If background is required, it is sketched in as briefly as possible; presentation of character is often a verbal portrait which highlights gesture, feature or mannerisms - features which are presented both as physical phenomena in themselves, and also as indicators of character traits. The individual often serves as a "type", in which the features of a broader context are fleshed out in the individual character who serves as an exemplar of the wider dimension. This doubling up of dimensions, the personal and the public, is characteristic of short stories through which the writer, as a social commentator, presents an analysis of the social and historical dimension of his time.

A further artistic constraint upon the short story is that only certain subjects and types of experiences can be accommodated by the form. Contrasts, transition experiences, rituals such as the rites of passage from one state of life to another, from a state of innocence to a knowledge of experience, the moment of insight and knowledge, the turning points where personal growth takes place - these either presented singly or in counterpoint, are the suitable subject matter of the traditional modern short story. Very often, in keeping with the demands of brevity, the revelation of insight is rendered implicitly, or at an abstract level of symbolic identification with the concrete event.

Consideration of all these demands results in the need to examine the role of the story-teller, because these demands throw into prominence the stance that the teller (or narrator) takes up. Very often in order to meet the artistic demands referred

to, the narrator has to manipulate the substance of the concrete events of the story. Understanding this manipulation is often the key to the story. Attention to the narrative situation entails consideration of the choices in the kinds of speech representation available, i.e. 'summary' or 'scenic presentation', and also the nature of discourse, direct, indirect, free direct (or interior monologue), free indirect (or narrated monologue). Studies of the short story have also concerned themselves with particularly the question of point of view, but this is not to claim that any particular point of view is the one required by the short story form.

Critics have described the short story in terms borrowed from other art forms. Poe believed that the short story could convey 'high excitements' comparable to poetry.[13] Elizabeth Bowen wrote in Collected Impressions,

> The story should have the valid central emotion and inner spontaneity of the lyric ... It must have tautness and clearness ... Poetic tautness and clarity are so essential to it that it may be said to stand at the edge of prose.

Faulkner wrote,

> Maybe every novelist wants to write poetry first, finds he can't and then tries the short story, which is the most demanding form after poetry. And, failing at that, only then does he take up novel writing.[14]

[13] M. Chapman, p.2.

[14] Both these references were quoted in: Wilfred Stone, Nancy Huddleston Packer and Robert Hoopes, The Short Story: An Introduction (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), p.5.

Another parallel has been drawn with the visual arts. Henry James, Elizabeth Bowen, Sherwood Anderson have all used the comparison with pictures or the cinema to make a point about one of the distinctive features of the short story, and Valerie Shaw clarifies the image by saying that the more useful comparison is with snapshot photography than with moving pictures.[15]

These artistic demands are certainly met by the stories of Nadine Gordimer. She was aware of the writers who preceded her - by her own admission she was a voracious reader as a child, and had read many of the key figures in the tradition of the modern short story. She felt a strong affinity for Katherine Mansfield, and she had read the stories of Henry James, Joyce, Lawrence, Hemingway and others, as a young writer. And even in her first international collection of stories, published in 1953, it is clear from the sort of stories she was writing, that she occupies a position very firmly within the tradition of the modern short story. Later, through the distinction of her writing, she becomes identifiable as one of the most important practitioners of the short story form within the tradition. Only a very few of her stories can be called experimental short fiction (to distinguish them from short stories). The bulk of her short stories conform with the artistic demands, and the best of them reveal how important those demands are as constraints on the sort of material that can be used, and the sort of treatment such material can receive. It will be the intention of this survey to

[15] See Michael Chapman's paper, pp. 2 and 3 for a fuller discussion of this point.

trace, through all of her stories, two separate but necessarily interlocking developments. First, she refines her craft of short story writing to a point where her third collection of short stories, Friday's Footprint was awarded the W.H. Smith Prize. This was the first time that this award, normally conferred on novels, was given to a collection of short stories. Her stories show her continual preoccupation with questions of form, and although she moves within the limits, she tries repeatedly (and with varying degrees of success) to extend them and transcend their constraints. Secondly, her stories reveal her development as a commentator on her social and political environment, which is the South Africa of the twentieth century, and so in a wider sense, her stories become a reflection of the times, and of her perception of them. The two critical traditions, that of close textual reading with attention to matters of form and structure, on the one hand, and the social-historical approach on the other, need not necessarily be exclusive. Each tradition can play a part in illuminating features of her short story art and its development, and to illustrate these is the concern of this study.

The approach adopted for this study has been to consider each collection as a group of stories which marks a stage in her development. Each chapter of this study deals with a separate collection, in order of publication, and examines the developments in her approach to short story structure and in her choice and treatment of themes. There is an appendix which shows the date of first publication of her stories in journals and magazines, and reveals also the range and diversity of magazines

which have accepted her stories. Lastly, there is a select bibliography of primary and secondary material relating mostly to the short stories.

CHAPTER TWO

FACE TO FACE and THE SOFT VOICE OF THE SERPENT

Nadine Gordimer's first short story, "Come Again Tomorrow" appeared in 1939, and her first collection, Face to Face was published some ten years later by a Johannesburg company called Silver Leaf Books. Some of its stories had appeared previously in various South African periodicals. In the following year, 1950, The Yale Review published the story called "The Hour and the Years" and this was the start of her international publishing career. The Soft Voice of the Serpent appeared in 1952 in America, published by Simon and Schuster and in 1953 in Britain, published by Gollancz. It included 13 of the Face to Face stories and 8 new stories which had been published in American and British journals. In this and succeeding collections, Gordimer does not appear to have made major textual changes from publication in journals to publication in collections; at most there would be some minor changes in some of the wording.[1] This is the pattern that she has followed since then, having her stories published widely in journals, and then collected once there was a sufficient body of stories to warrant it.

The Soft Voice of the Serpent shows the beginnings of the style and approach that Gordimer was to develop throughout her career. She seems to try out a number of structural patterns and

[1] N.J. Nell, Nadine Gordimer: Novelist and Short Story Writer (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1964), pp. 7-14.

stylistic devices in these stories: some of which she develops in later collections; others she discards. Similarly, the thematic concerns that are apparent reappear in various guises throughout her stories. C J Millar comments that she could be said, in this collection, to have found her "voice", her "literary personality".[2]

The "unity of effect or impression" which was listed earlier as one of the artistic demands of the modern short story is apparent in all of these early stories. A detailed analysis of all the stories in Face to Face and The Soft Voice of the Serpent reveals that in achieving this unity of impression, there exists sufficient evidence of structural similarities to suggest that Gordimer's stories seem to follow a number of structural patterns in attaining this unity of effect. This is not to say that the process of writing is mechanical, writing to formula, but rather that the way Gordimer saw her stories resulted in those features which they have in common. The simplest pattern that emerges is the story as a single sustained revelation. There are no dominating crisis points, or key moments that reveal special overriding insights. The whole experience is what in the end produces the realisation in the mind of the reader of the core of the story. Stories such as "La Vie Bohème", "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?" and "The Train from Rhodesia" are stories of this type, and they have a powerful impact because of the singularity of their focus. Even a

[2] C.J. Millar, "The Contemporary South African Short Story," MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1962, p.40.

story like "The Last of the Old-Fashioned Girls", itself not a successful story, has an urgency about it that comes from the single sustained encounter, from which nothing distracts the reader.

The second pattern that emerges has the story in two sections. The first section contains all the necessary background, and a certain amount of characterising detail, either in the form of action, or conversation, or report. The second section usually involves an encounter of sorts, during which the central revelation occurs. For this pattern to be successful, the first section must be properly proportioned so as to lead up to the centrality of the revelation in the second section. Stories of this sort are "The Soft Voice of the Serpent" and "Ah, Woe is Me".

The third pattern can be regarded as the classic Gordimerian short story structure. This pattern has three sections. The first serves the purpose of providing background, setting the atmosphere, and giving some details of character. The second section is the encounter which reveals, in high focus, the central issue of the story. The third section is a brief symbolic action or comment which encapsulates the revelation and in so doing, highlights its centrality in the story, ensuring the singleness of effect. In this study, this final section is referred to as the emblematic action, because the action (or comment) serves as an emblem for the central realisation of the story. The clearest example of this pattern can be found in "The Umbilical Cord".

The fourth pattern that occurs has the central moment of the story at the intersection of two planes not normally in contact

with each other. As they intersect, a revelation takes place in such a way as to re-define the nature of the two planes and our reactions to them. "The Hour and the Years" provides a good example of this pattern, the title suggesting the two planes which intersect. Analysing the stories individually will reveal the effectiveness of these patterns as they occur.

The arrangement of stories in each collection is decided on by Gordimer herself, to show the range and variety of her stories.[3] The sequence is not necessarily either chronological or thematic. In this chapter, the stories will be grouped according to theme, and the first group of stories are those in which the façade of self-deception is shown up. This is a theme that Gordimer repeatedly returns to, yet these early stories are as accurate and as perceptive as any in her canon.

"The Soft Voice of the Serpent" is a story that deals with the self-deception of a crippled man. He has lost his left leg, and is recuperating, looked after by his wife. He spends his time in the garden, and the way he plans to come to terms with his loss is by a 'system' of gradual recognition - allowing himself by small steps to approach full realisation of what he had become. "It would become such a habit never to get to the point of realising, that he never would realise it. And one day he would find he had achieved what he wanted: he would feel as if he had always been like that."[4] Having filled in the background,

[3]Unpublished interview between Nadine Gordimer and Michael King on 12 January 1983.

[4]Nadine Gordimer, The Soft Voice of the Serpent (London: Gollancz, 1953), p.2. (All succeeding page references will be included in the text.)

Gordimer moves into the crux of the story, which in this case, takes the form of an encounter between the man and his wife, and a maimed locust. There is a strong identification between the man and the locust, both of whom suffer the same disability. The locust, however, is seen to be struggling hard despite its disability, but the reader is tempted into believing, as the wife does, that its situation and that of the man, and their responses to it, are compatible. The temptation of the 'soft voice' is to surrender into a reluctance to face up to the reality of disability. The man says: "I've been watching it, and honestly, it's uncanny. I can see it feels just like I do." (SVS, p.6). Having tempted the reader into this frame of mind, the story then ends with the disabusing reminder that the locust was not in fact disabled as the man was - the locust could still fly. The story has a strong central incident, or focus, which is introduced by a section of the story which gives the reader the necessary background, both thematically and contextually. The story also establishes another feature common to many of Gordimer's stories - the ironic role of the title as part of the unfolding of the story itself. The reference to the 'serpent', with all the connotations of the Garden of Eden tempter, prepares the reader for deception of some sort. That the main character of the story is deceived, we can readily believe; that the reader himself is to be linked with that deception, we forget until we realise, at the story's ending, that this was the case.

The story succeeds for the following reasons. The use of detail is precise and economical. What detail is presented is directly relevant to the story's intention. The story moves

clearly from one section to the other, and this clarity allows the reader to hold the whole story together, so that the impact of the ending is enhanced by the clarity of the structure of the whole.

The other story that deals with the facade of self-deception is "The Kindest Thing to Do". The central incident of this story is the mercy killing of a bird. The central character is a girl, and because she had not kept an eye on the family's dog, she is held to be responsible for the maiming of the bird. So she has to do the mercy killing. When she finds the bird, at the back of the house, it was not a bird, but "a flattened mess of dusty feathers, torn and wet with the dog's saliva, oozing dark blood ..." (SVS, p.30). As such, it would not have been difficult to kill. But when she sees the head of the bird, "sunken in the last humility, down upon its broken breast" (SVS, p.31), she understands the life of the animal, and knows her responsibility for causing this destruction, and she recognises the fact that "nothing could expiate this" (SVS, p.31). But, because of the reality of the bird's continued suffering, she does kill it. Then she finds the passion that she had felt in her empathy for the bird suddenly drained from the experience. It is now just a dead bird. The knowledge of death and of killing outweighs the suffering or pity that she had had for the bird.

The story is structured in such a way that the simple incident of the bird's death is surrounded with successively complicating levels of awareness and questioning. The opening section, presenting the background, has a marvellously evocative tone of peace, of drowsy restfulness. Words such as 'stupor',

'dreamily', and 'suspended' (SVS, p.26) create the atmosphere, which is then interrupted by the mother's request ("Have your got Mickey there?" (SVS, p.26), and then broken by the mother's (unstated) revelation that the dog, Mickey, had attacked the bird that they had been sheltering.

> And the next moment it was gone, the beautiful lassitude turned sick and sour within her, the exquisite torpor hung heavy around her neck, she struggled free of the coils of the dead afternoon. "But I was sure ...," she said, stunned. (SVS, p.28)

What follows is the actual killing of the bird, and the girl's emotional response to it. But the story's ending is the moment of truth, because here is revealed the long term attitude that the girl will adopt towards the incident. When she tells her 'friends' of it, her tone is studied, social. The way her announcement was greeted - "'How brave of you ' said the young man, laughing, with mock heroic emphasis." (SVS, p.33) - reveals what the outside world makes of it, and she moulds her public response to conform with it, and in so doing, she destroys the lesson that might have been possible in what she had had to do that afternoon.

> "Well, I did," she said stoutly, carelessly; and laughing like a woman of spirit, she took the olive from him and popped it into her mouth. (SVS, p.33)

In the light of that ending, the title then assumes an irony that lifts it above the inanity of the 'sensible' social response. The story is changed by the ending from being a simple story of the killing of a bird, to the complex arrangement of emotions and emotional reactions that surround the realisation of guilt and the evasion of responsibility towards life.

These two stories then, represent the two sides of the theme. The one deals with the exposing of the self-deception, the other with the background and formation of it.

The next group of stories also deals with that moment of truth in which insight and understanding are made possible, but in this instance, that which prevents the insight is not a façade or a deception, but the result of ignorance or lack of experience of life. Three of the stories in the group have a child as the central character, another two are sprawling accounts of life lived from childhood to adulthood, and the last deals with a young man on the threshold of his career. The stories are: "A Watcher of the Dead", "La Vie Bohème", "The Umbilical Cord", "The Defeated", "The Prisoner" and "In the Beginning". It is not surprising that this theme should receive such treatment. First, Gordimer herself as a young writer would have had close access to the sorts of experience and insights described. Secondly,

> a feature of the modern short story is that one of the subject matters most suited to its form is a key psychological turning point, and the experience of growing up is in essence a series of psychological turning points.

However, what makes this point noteworthy is that Gordimer seems, because of both her sensitivity and her command of detail, to be well equipped to capture and articulate those moments in which insights and self-realisation are made possible.

"A Watcher of the Dead" is a rich story for examining characteristics of Gordimer's writing. The story is told in the first person - a narrative situation that Gordimer does not

frequently use. (There are only six of the twenty-four stories in these two collections that have a first person narrator.)

The narrator is a girl of sixteen who observes the conflict between the watcher of the dead (required by Jewish ritual to sit up during the night to watch over a dead person) who acts according to the rules, and her mother, who had forgotten those rules, and who now denies their validity. The conflict comes to a head when the girl's mother wants to kiss the dead grandmother goodnight. The watcher stops her, as under Jewish ritual, touching the dead is not allowed. The mother leaves the room, furious, without kissing her mother. In the morning, the narrator expects to find the tension still raging, but her mother is at ease and reconciled. It is only later on that the narrator realises that during the night, her mother had gone down to the room, and had found the watcher fast asleep. She had then been able to take proper leave of her mother without openly defying the rituals. In the resulting frame of mind, she is able to sympathise with the old man who could not stay awake.

The problem of using the first person narration is that the point of view in the story is not that of a sixteen year old but of an adult looking back to the time when she was sixteen. Consequently, the narrator is conscious of things she would not have been conscious of at sixteen; and worse, these intrusions have a flavour that is more Gordimer than the narrator herself. Examples of this occur regularly. "We children did not know that this placing of the body on the floor was a gesture of the Jewish faith, signifying the renunciation of worldly comforts." (SVS, p.59). "Though it didn't show, I realised later, out of my know-

ledge of my own life as a woman, that there was a wistfulness in my mother's acceptance of her mother's respect." (SVS, p.61). "Like all small officials, he clutched at the authority behind him." (SVS, p.64). These intrusions occur because a first person narrator involves certain restrictions and these restrictions in this case were incompletely adopted. First person narration requires a full identification of the writer with his character. Authorial comments may sometimes be able to be well-hidden in third person narration, but not in first person narration.

There are some marvellous examples of the clarity and precision of Gordimer's description, in which an acute eye for detail is coupled with a strong sense of discrimination as to what is and what is not a feature worth describing. The description of the watcher gives a complete picture of both the man himself, and the type of man.

> The synagogue sent an elderly gentleman who dwindled from a big stomach, outlined with a watch chain, to thin legs that ended in neat, shabby brown shoes, supple with years of polishing. He wore glasses that made his brown eyes look very big, he had a small beard, and his face was pleasantly pink and planned in folds - a fold beneath each eye, another fold where the cheek skirted the mouth, a fold where the jaw met the neck, a fold where the neck met the collar. (SVS, p.59)

A third feature of Gordimer's writing can be seen in this story. Part of the power of her observations lies in her measured detachment from what is being observed. This dispassionate detachment often leads her into analysis of human weaknesses unrelieved by any redeeming features, but perhaps there is a need for this sort of analysis to take place before recognition of those

weaknesses is possible. Her detachment allows her to see the following scene, and the way she describes it makes a pertinent point about the way in which grief has to be faced, which is, that even in the midst of the greatest suffering, the everyday continues.

> My mother began to cry, her face pulled awry, looking more like Helen than ever, and tears ran down into her mouth. Helen, William and I stood still, on the other side of the kitchen table, afraid to touch her.
>
> "I don't want her to be with him. I don't want her to be with him." my mother said. Nobody answered, nobody spoke or moved.
>
> Presently, she got up and blew her nose, and went over to the sink to wash her hands. (SVS, p.62, 63)

Its lack of sentimentality rings true.

The next story in this group, "La Vie Bohème", is also about a young girl. She has just left school, and comes to a reluctant half-recognition that the 'vie Bohème' that she fondly pictures her rebel sister living, is in fact, very much domesticated mundaneness. This story is not told in the first person. Gordimer uses the third person narration almost as if she is determined to be able to have the necessary detachment that will allow the reader to realise the nature of the young sister's reaction. A first person narrator has to be at best partly conscious of what she is experiencing before she can communicate that to the readers. A third person narrator can have a much higher threshold of awareness, and can see with clarity what is beyond the capability of the central figure - in this case, a young girl - to see. The storyline centres on the visit of the young sister to her elder sister who had left home to marry young, and live 'la vie Bohème' in a studio in town. The young sister is sympathetic

with the elder sister's rebellion, in fact wants to identify with it. She lives with a dream of her sister's way of life because she herself aspires to such a lifestyle. The visit forces her to confront the reality of nappies, crying babies, grinding domesticity, in rather drab, uninspiring conditions. It is not stimulating - the elder sister, who had done some painting herself, had not seen the exhibition of modern Italian art in town - she had not even known about it. All these realisations depress the unmarried sister, and she suddenly does not want to meet the husband. She is scared that he will complete the process of disillusionment.

She leaves, but on an impulse, to cheer up her sister, buys her a present that will remind her of a more carefree existence, where extravagance was acceptable. On her return to the flat, she is met by the husband and she hands over the present without identifying herself as his sister-in-law. In this way, she seeks to preserve at least part of her dream, her delusion.

This story is an example of the first pattern mentioned earlier, in which the story is a single continuing revelation. It is the whole visit that produces the insights, not any specific moment within it. The singleness of effect produces a strong sense of the unity of the story.

The third story of childhood is called "The Umbilical Cord". The point of the title is contained in the ending, which needs special attention. Leo, the storekeeper's child, has started to resent the store, and now considers himself above it because he has a job at a Chemist shop in town. He keeps aloof from the other people in the store when he is required to help out, but he

remembers and imagines a sexual encounter with the daughter of Marius Coetzee. When Coetzee enters the store with his daughter - something his political opinions had never tolerated before - Leo imagines that it is in connection with that. Various devices increase the tension, and the story moves to a massive anti-climax when it turns out that Coetzee's daughter wants a red raincoat that is not available anywhere else.

The underlying story is of the façade that Leo builds up - of 'superiority', scorn for the lack of sophistication of the store world and its people. He describes them in terms which reveal his petulance. Words like 'surliness', 'sullen' and 'disgruntledness' abound. (SVS, p.159, 160). However, when Coetzee enters the store, and Leo jumps to his guilty and erroneous conclusion, his reaction is the terror of a child. "His heart, alas, no longer cool and contemptuous, remembered at once that it was only a child, and gibbering, tried to race away." (SVS, p.162). The point of the story has been made. Despite attempts to appear adult and to distance himself from his past, he reverts at the moment of crisis to a child-like desire to evade responsibility.

This story conforms with the third structural pattern described earlier. It starts with an introduction which fills in the background, both as to the main character, and to the context. Then comes the central encounter, which is the visit of Coetzee to the store, and this produces various revelations at the different levels of interaction between people that it produces. Lastly, there is the emblematic action, a small incident which encapsulates an aspect of the story's revelation, in action

which will 'say it' better than words could. When Coetzee and his daughter have gone, Leo does what he had often done as a child; he asks his mother, as a special treat, for a pickle from the tub. The request for the pickle sums up the child's regression and reveals the link between himself and his mother - one which unlike the physical umbilical cord, is not severed. The title points towards the emblematic action, and to its importance, and the emblematic action itself reinforces the point made during the encounter that constitutes the main part of the story.

The next two stories are not as successful as the others. They sprawl over a vast area, picking up small points from a wide possible range, and lacking that concentration on a unifying insight that makes the other stories so powerful. "The Defeated" has a number of strong links with Gordimer's first novel, The Lying Days. The white girl from the mine houses, finding fascination in the forbidden Concession Store and its people, the wealth of immediate description, and the fascinated distaste for the crude vitality of the store's clientele, are features common to both the story and the novel. However, while that wealth of detail might be necessary for a novel, it is excessive in a short story. The stages of growth in the companionship of the narrator and Miriam Saiyetovitz are rushed over in narrative rather than in scenic presentation and the story loses something in the process. Eventually the details have to be reported from 'offstage' - because there is too much. "So the years of our training passed ... We met seldom during the first six months of our adult life ... Then came the war ... Whilst I was with a field hospital in Italy I heard that Miriam had married ..." (SVS, p.209). The

story only gets into focus when the narrator returns to her parents' home, and to the Saiyetovitz's store as a young adult, and she can see what the years have done to Miriam's parents. As the title seems to refer mainly to them, the rest of the story, whose function must therefore be characterising background, seems excessive to the purpose. The narrator experiences the strangeness of a once familiar place that has not changed much in reality, but which now appears strange because the change was in the perceiver. "Down at the stores it was the same as ever, only dirtier, smaller, more chipped and smeared - the way reality often is in contrast with the image carried long in the mind." (SVS, p.210). They talk of Miriam, but she has left them spiritually as well as physically. The parents "had seen Miriam's little boy only three times since he was born. Miriam they saw hardly at all; her husband never." (SVS, p.212). The parents are defeated because they have lost Miriam, who (as a result of their efforts) has risen above them, and who lacks the humanity that should have shown more respect towards her parents. The Saiyetovitzes are further defeated by their own inability to rise above this. Like Farringdon in James Joyce's story "Counterparts", they visit their defeat onto those below them who are also unable to counter the attack. Mr Saiyetovitz remains "angry and browbeating, sullen and final, lashing weakness at the weak." (SVS, p.212).

"The Prisoner" suffers a similar structural weakness - it is a sprawling episodic account told in the first person by a pupil of the cycles of growth which are possible in teacher-pupil relationships. The narrator grows from childhood to adulthood,

experiencing changes - internal developments as well as external events - along the way. The narrative of the life of the teacher, Mrs Keyter, is marked not by any internal changes which might have occurred, but only by the external - her son, Mark's growing up, her husband's leaving them, the war, Mark's marriage, and then death; but in all this, Mrs Keyter stays the same. Mark's child comes to live with Mrs Keyter whom the narrator visits on her return home. This build-up forms the bulk of the story, but only at this point does the story reach the necessary pitch of concentration.

Initially, she finds the sameness of the schoolhouse comforting. When the narrator asks after Mark's child, Mrs Keyter's joy overrides the patient resignation with which she normally faces existence. The narrator feels relief that she does not have to feel sorry for Mrs Keyter. Then the realisation occurs - suddenly the school environment is characterised by chalk and dryness, and an overriding sterility. "Nothing has changed. In poverty and drabness nothing changes. Wood does not wither. Chalk does not rot. What is dead and dry lives on, forever and is forever dead." (SVS, p.90). The realization concerns the life (the child's life) that Mrs Keyter holds in her hands, amidst the death of everything else. The ex-pupil has the anagnorisis, not the teacher. The story ends with a very powerful emblematic action, revealing the pointlessness, frustration and incipient hostility of the prisoner. In the early twilight, the boy is seen throwing stones at the lightpole. The boy is a prisoner to his circumstances, just as Mrs Keyter has been all her life.

The last story in this grouping, "In the Beginning", con-

cerns a young medical student doing a midwifery course, and his relationship with the Senior Nurse in the Maternity section. After the background has been filled in, by presentation of the experiences of the group of young students, the story moves into an encounter where insight is possible. This occurs when twins are being born, and the student is not able to locate the second twin. Sister Dingwall does the job, and as she does it, reveals aspects of her humanity that were not normally apparent - uncertainty, concern, surprise perhaps. She shows herself to be different from the image of her that the students had built up around her. Later the student sees himself in the mirror and realises that he too is different from what he looks like. Ultimately, the story is slight, because the connection between the background action and the crisis action is slight and the emblematic action is not a powerfully characteristic one, nor specially symbolic either.

This group of stories shows how moments of insight occur in young children as a part of that process that changes innocence into experience. In that process, some learning should take place, and in some cases it does, but in others, the self-delusion that Gordimer is so sharp in pinpointing is the response that is made, and no personal growth occurs.

One of the areas of personal growth in South Africa involves the complex web of attitudes and prejudices towards people of different racial classification. Gordimer herself speaks of this area of growth:

> To be born a South African is to be presented with <u>given</u> facts of race on the same level of reality as the <u>absolute</u> facts of birth and

> death ... I have spoken and written often, in my life, of the second or rebirth many South African whites go through. I mean by this simply what happens when the child begins to realise the fact that the black does not enter through the white man's front door is not in the same category as the fact that the dead will never come back.[5]

A number of Gordimer's stories deal with this moment, or with the moment when that rebirth is possible, but does not occur. Linked with this insight is another claim about South Africa that Gordimer makes some years later.

> There is no country in the Western world where the creative imagination, whatever it seizes upon, finds the focus of even the most private event set in the overall social determination of racial laws.[6]

South Africa, then, is a society in which every action becomes in some way a political action, and because of the nature of the laws that form and control the society's interaction with itself, questions of personal identity and even the smallest matters of everyday reality become central political issues. This view is especially valid for the writer of short stories, because of the nature of the short story form, in which the individual encounter serves as a reflection of the general environment within which it occurs.

"Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?" is one of the finest stories in this collection. It deals with a chance encounter in which the fundamental aspects of the relationship of

[5] Nadine Gordimer, "What Being a South African Means to Me," South African Outlook, 117 (1977), p.88.

[6] Nadine Gordimer, "English Language Literature and Politics in South Africa," Journal of Southern African Studies, 2, No. 2 (1976), p.131,132.

the people involved are thrown up and revealed. It meets the demands of brevity and singleness of effect and as the narrative tone is neutral, there is no distraction from the events and what they reveal. The encounter itself is presented starkly, unadorned by comment. Yet the story is neither simple, nor simplistic.

The story is the encounter of a white girl with a black man, in which initially at least, the white girl is the victim, and the black man the aggressor. He tries to grab her parcels from her; she resists; in the scuffle they fall, and she makes her escape from him while he is scrabbling in the dirt to get the parcels. She runs to the road, and then to the houses, in order to call the police. But she is prevented by the realisation of what will inevitably be the consequences of that act. What is it then, that transforms the story?

First, we have to understand the nature of the encounter. The title ironically suggests it. Is that sort of encounter the only sort of encounter possible between black and white - one in which there will always be a victim and an aggressor? Let us take the response of the black man first. On the face of it, he is the aggressor. Yet he is not presented as someone to be feared. The first mention of him is that he is complementary with the main character in the landscape. "She drew from it the sense of balance ..." (SVS, p.92). Next his tattered clothes are described, and in this, he is presented as a victim in his own right. Not only that, but he is suffering as well. He is cold, and he appears not to have slept for a long time. When he does encounter her suddenly, it is not fear of him, but Fear in gene-

ral that controls her. It is as if the man is not just himself, but is representative of all men driven to desperate measures. Even as he confronts her, it is his eyes, not hers, that show distrust, and she notices "the pink place where the skin had been grazed away." (SVS, p.95). By this time, the reader should be aware that the writer's intention is not to present this man just as an aggressor, but as a victim as well, a fellow sufferer.

At the start of the story, her recognition of him is off-hand. She perceives his existence, but it means nothing to her. As she passes him, she is more concerned with the smell of pine-needles on her hands than she was with him and his plight. However, she does recognise even then, a pang of guilt. It was her whiteness, and the privileged position it carried, that had made her fortunate and him unfortunate. In feeling guilt, she was recognising her complicity in the injustice of it. In the encounter itself, she regresses into unconscious behaviour "whimpering like an idiot or a child" (SVS, p.94), and when she drops the parcels, she chooses the option of running away rather than of retrieving them as her solution. Being white, she has access to the white law enforcement machinery, and she instinctively goes to set it in motion. But, and this is the redeeming feature of the story, she recognises, behind his aggression, the motives that led to it, and also the strength and validity of such motives. She also recognises what the possible consequences of calling the police would be. Here her own humanity rescues her, and it is not fear or revulsion which is predominant in her heart, but guilt. The story ends there,

although the issues raised continue to spill all over its confines. The particular strength of the story is the way in which everything is directed towards the same goal. Nothing is peripheral. Yet it resonates so intensely because the encounter explains itself, and does not need the intervention of any narrator to ensure that any point is made. It redeems itself by the fact that humanity is centrally located, and that the girl, from whose point of view the story is told, emerges knowing more than when she started. The experience has communicated to her a sense of her own responsibility for his behaviour.

The other stories do not allow this. The barrier of race not only prevents people from encountering each other, but also stops them understanding why. The only other story where there is perhaps a partial knowing, is "The Amateurs".

A group of well-intentioned white actors is going to present Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest to a selected black audience in the Location Hall. The players are unsure of their reception. They wonder, with a certain amount of intellectual snobbishness, whether the blacks can appreciate the play. So during the play, first unintentionally, then intentionally, they ham it up to the vociferous delight of the audience. The applause is enormous, and the speech of thanks is warm and genuinely appreciative of what they had offered. It is the reactions of the actors at this stage that constitute the story's moment of truth. The fat young man can only see what happened to the Wilde play. In his eyes, they had hammed up a Wilde play, and the audience had liked it. He does not know what should have been done, and he is uncertain. The young woman is also bewil-

dered, but she does not understand why they had done what they did, nor does she understand the reaction of the audience, as expressed in the speech of thanks. Only the girl, who alone had taken the trouble to apply her make-up as for a proper performance, seems to have an inkling of what had been done. "The girl was plucking sullenly at the feathered hat, resting on her knee. 'We cheated them; we shouldn't have done it,' she said." (SVS, p.106).

What was it that prevented a proper communication of the play? Probably not so much a barrier as a gulf - a gulf of understanding between black and white. Presenting a comedy of manners requires an audience that knows and understands the cultural mores under review, and the blacks could hardly be expected to have known them. So merely presenting that play shows a lack of sensitivity. But what makes the experience so baffling for the white players is the enormous response. They do not understand that response, nor the speech. The speech is appreciative of "the wonderful thing you have brought to us" (SVS, p.105). The play itself, the fact that it was Wilde, is irrelevant, because what the speaker sees in it is people doing things with their free time in a constructive way. People have been made 'happy' - not in that the play has entertained them, but in that the players have made the effort. The play is forgotten in the speech, which moves into the conditions of township life, the realities of juvenile delinquency, of the Police Station, and of the violence in the streets.

The Wilde play, with its effete and witty fripperies is discarded in the face of South African township life. "The

amateurs were forgotten by themselves and each other, abandoned dolls, each was alone." (SVS, p.105). The barrier between black and white is most apparent when one considers the different responses that each group makes to the experience.

In Gordimer's portrayals of black-white relationships, the whites are mercilessly exposed time after time. This normally occurs for two reasons: their "lack of compassion" for the blacks, and the "comfortable hypocrisy" employed to justify their actions or omissions.[7] Gordimer herself said:

> In the fifties, there was this feeling that somehow the blacks have got their heads screwed on the right way - it is the whites who are puzzled, and bumbling and saying the wrong things ...[8]

The next two stories demonstrate this particularly well.

The first story, "The Catch", presents the barrier which exists between a white couple on holiday at the sea, and an Indian fisherman, also on holiday. At first, the three of them are able to put aside their accumulated prejudices to form a holiday friendship. This is obviously at a superficial level, but at least the interaction is unembarrassed. "They almost forgot he was an Indian. And this, too, though they did not know it, produced a lightening of the heart ..." (SVS, p.10). Later on, the return of the whites to their accustomed attitudes creates the barrier that separates them, and makes the final encounter between them awkward and embarrassing, producing a lack

[7] Millar, p.57.

[8] Unpublished interview, 12 January 1983.

of understanding that has not previously been there. Gordimer allows the demands of theme to affect the organic structure of the story, and what she produces is a story that seems to set up two levels of existence. The one level is the 'white', sophisticated, urban-paced lifestyle that the white couple have known before their holiday starts. Racial exclusivity characterises this level. The other level is a more natural, more whole existence, which is in touch with and which takes its pace from nature. Obviously the Indian inhabits that plane. The story, then, is about the intersection of the two planes, and the way that the intersection is not able to be maintained by the whites in the face of the arrival of 'friends' from the city.

The Indian is placed within his context early on - he walks along the 'tensionless shore'. He sets the pace of the whites' day; they measure their morning according to his movements. He is described in terms of natural things such as birds, and the sea; he has a special empathy with the moods and movements of the sea, and is seen as "a brave moment of whole man". (SVS, p.18).

The white couple, on the other hand, have initial difficulties adjusting to the lack of pace on their holiday. When the initial contact is made, from his side, they fall into it with increasing ease. Admittedly the contact is never deep, nor is it sustained.

When the Indian catches his big fish, after their first laziness, they are caught in the triumph of it as well. The woman has her picture taken with the fish before the Indian does. In this section of the story, the narrator's attention is focused on the Indian and his actions and responses. After their return

to their hotel, the couple discover that friends have come from the city, and they find themselves "toppling over into their old stream again." (SVS, p.20). They return to their sophisticated plane of existence, assuming the attitudes that they had been used to before the holiday, and that they had lived with. When they encounter the Indian again on their way to spend a night out in Durban, he has become, if not a stranger to them, then at least an embarrassment, something that needs to be explained away to their friends. The Indian is stuck and needs a lift, which they give him, but the time spent together only serves to point out the separation between them. The whites act unnaturally, with forced laughter, and forced conversation, but what is also apparent is that the Indian is affected by the situation, and he loses some of his ease. There is an emblematic action to bring the story to a close - an hysterical laughter that is not understood.

Part of the alienation is produced by a strategic shift of point of view. For most of the story, the narrator focuses on the Indian, but once the whites have adopted the city attitudes again, the narrator sees things through their perspective. The effect of this shift is to swing our sympathy towards the Indian. He may have changed, but we can see only too clearly that the main change is in the whites. It is they who are responsible for re-erecting the barrier between them. His behaviour at the end is correct, theirs is discourteous.

> "I must thank you very much," he kept saying seriously. "I must thank you."
> "That's all right," the husband smiled, starting the car with a roar. The Indian was

> saying something, but the revving of the engine drowned it. (SVS, p.24)

The second story in which a barrier exists, and in which no learning takes place from encountering it, is "Ah, Woe is Me". Here the use of the first person narrator is much better controlled than in "A Watcher of the Dead". The narrator is a white lady, whose servant, Sarah, is constantly bemoaning her fate in the words of the title. Sarah has been brought up on a mission, and has very strict ideas on the upbringing of her children. Her strictness has taken the form of stern, remorseless disapproval, and she would not allow her children the normal spontaneous pursuits of their peers. She has also insisted on their appearance being neat and tidy at all times. Sarah's legs are bad, and eventually she is forced to stop working. This means she will not be able to apply the same standards of dress and behaviour to her children as she had previously done. The children come infrequently to visit the narrator, to bring news of Sarah. The visits are not really successful, because of the barrier between them: "I had the curious feeling that they were embarrassed, not by me, but for me; as if their faces knew that I could not help asking these same questions, because the real state of their lives was unknown and unimagined by me, and therefore beyond my questioning." (SVS, p.138). The last visit of Sarah's daughter, Janet, reveals the crisis in the family. Both parents are out of work, Robert works in a dairy, Felicia is married and gone to Bloemfontein, and Janet, for whom hopes were held of becoming a teacher is forced to stay at home to look after her sick mother. The narrator does

not know what to do, so she gives Janet discarded clothing and money. Then she asks her new maid, Caroline, to give Janet tea. When Janet is ready to leave, the narrator observes the battle Janet is having to stop herself from crying. When the child does collapse, and break down into tears, the narrator, in all sincerity, can think of nothing to do for her except give her a handkerchief to wipe her eyes with. This is the effect of the barrier. Under normal circumstances, a child in tears because her mother is sick, and because her family is breaking up under the grinding effects of poverty, would be comforted with love and tenderness. Here, the narrator is not consciously heartless - she wants to do something to help. She is just helpless in perceiving what she can do. The barrier does not allow the normal response, because the relationship between them can not be classed as normal.

One of the important structural features of the story is the way that the first person narrator is used to influence the reader's reactions. Gordimer wants the white narrator to be seen to be responsible in large part for the barrier. This means that the narrator has to condemn herself by the way she tells the story. And this in fact occurs. The comment that Sarah "was a good cook, though extravagant with butter" reveals as much about the madam as about the maid.[9] The narrator concentrates on Sarah and her children during the bulk of the story, but allows the direction to shift so that at the end she is talking as much

[9] Millar, p.71.

about herself as about anybody else. This shift has been noted in other stories, and it has the same effect. It leads the reader to reassess the judgements he has arrived at during the story. The point of narrative also indicates that the madam does not see that she has to justify herself or her actions. She is doing what she can, she thinks. It is the race barrier that prevents her from seeing how much more she could, and possibly should be doing.

The next story, "Monday is Better than Sunday", while also dealing with a master-servant relationship, seems to be a much lesser achievement, because the white family is merely caricatured. The story outline is simple. The white family's Sunday is one long round of meals and relaxation at home, and the person who makes it all possible is Elizabeth, their maid. She cooks, cleans, makes the beds, from the start of the day till nightfall. The family treat her without consideration. They are insistent, demanding and ungrateful. While the portrayal may be accurate, it does not engage the reader, and the story fails to rise beyond an outline. The family lacks humanity; Elizabeth in her uncomplaining response also seems lifeless. The only touch of life comes when the young girl overhears Elizabeth talking to herself as she cleans out the bath. "That girl's a bit queer. She's saying Oh Jesus! Oh Jesus! all the time she's doing the bath." (SVS, p.226). Apart from this, Elizabeth shows no resentment at all, and that is unsatisfactory - it would be only human to show resentment in such circumstances, and while it may be argued that such humanity would not be tolerated by the white family, the point is not made, even indirectly, by the story

itself. The story ends with Elizabeth wearily going up to her room at the top of the block of flats. As she surveys the city, she feels lonely. There is something unexpected about this emotion, but it is immediately recognised as being valid. To sum up, the idea of the story is coldly clear, and as such, the outline is successful. However, the story is less than successful because the characters fail to come to life in such a way that their interaction with each other is convincing.

The last story to deal directly with racial matters is "Another Part of the Sky". It follows the classic Gordimer pattern of a sustained opening section, then a heightened moment of encounter, through which the layers of delusion are stripped away, and recognition is made possible, followed by a tailpiece revealing the full extent of insight and realisation. The central figure is Collins, a reformatory principal who is humane and progressive. His idealistic convictions have led him to make certain changes in the running of the reformatory for which the newspapers have described him as "the man who pulled down prison walls and grew geraniums in their place." (SVS, p.144). What the description leaves out is the extent to which Collins identifies himself with the success or failure of his plan. His commitment to it is complete. When one special boy runs away, Collins lives with a worry for him that gnaws at his inner being to the extent that he fails in his other commitments. He returns home on a Sunday night, unable to talk the matter through with his wife, who lies awake in the darkness next to him, but separated from him by the fact of his involvement with his work.

> But they did not speak. They would never speak. Somewhere below the face of the boy, a pang which had never yet found the right moment to claim attention lifted feebly like the eye of lightning that opens and shuts in another part of the sky. When would there be time to speak to her, to read the face of his wife as he struggled to read the faces of the nameless, the dispossessed whom God made it incumbent upon him that he should spend his time reading? (SVS, p.150)

The heightened moment of encounter comes just after they have fallen asleep. Ngubane, one of Collins' assistants comes to the door, looking distraught, to report that something terrible has happened. Freshly awakened, Collins fears that this is the moment when the truth will be revealed about the boy who ran away, that he has committed a crime and has been caught, and that Collins' plan has failed irrevocably for him. So when Ngubane starts talking of his own brother, who has just been run over by a bus, Collins does not understand. His repeated incomprehending questions finally break Ngubane, and he weeps. Only now is Collins able to clear his mind of his own preconceived version of what the bad news would be. Only now is he able to show with the natural warmth and compassion that is the basis for everything in his life, including his plan, his sympathy and support for Ngubane.

The story ends with a passage of reflection on this incident. Collins and his wife have a cup of tea together, and then return to bed. She says that she had thought it would have been news of the boy, and Collins admits that he too has had the same thought. With this there comes for him the agony of realisation of failure. It is a two-fold failure.

First, he realises that his reaction to Ngubane was in-

adequate because his mind was so concerned with the boy that when he realised what Ngubane was saying, he had reacted with passionate relief that it was Ngubane's brother and not the boy who was dead. From this there is the logical extension: "If there is room for the boy, then there is no room for Ngubane." (SVS, p.154).

The second failure is worse. It is more complex, too. Collins was essentially a good, compassionate man, guided by the highest beliefs to a care and concern for his fellow man. Yet these are not held in balance. "This conscience like a hunger that made him want to answer for all the faces, all the imploring of the dispossessed" (SVS, p.154) has in fact turned him away from his wife, the person supposed to be closest to him.

What has he achieved for her during this time? What has been her share? He thinks of "The silence of his wife, going about her business whilst he worried, nine years he worried, turned from her to this problem or that." (SVS, p.154,155). She has done nothing to deserve it, yet it is his failure to see what he is not doing for her, his failure to see what he is doing to her. "If you search one face, you turn your back on another." (SVS, p.155). And that is what the story is about. His wife is the "other part of the sky" - which he does not look at, and he realises this to be his second failure.

A sensitive moral sense is required to understand Collins. How can it be that the quality of compassion shown in one situation will result in a failure of compassion shown towards his wife? The very quality that causes us to regard him as 'good' in one context is also the reason for regarding him as

'bad' in another.[10]

The remaining stories in the collection cannot be fitted into thematic groups, so I shall deal with them individually. "The Train from Rhodesia" is another classic story. Everything is contained within the framing device of the train's approaching a station at the start, and leaving the station at the end. Three people are thrown into an encounter with each other; a girl, her husband, and a black animal seller. Their differing perceptions and points of view are revealed by their reactions to what occurs.

A white couple from Rhodesia see an old African selling carved wooden animals at a station. She takes a fancy to a Lion she sees, but at the price asked, three shillings and sixpence, it is too expensive to buy. The husband waits till the train is about to pull off, knowing that the price will be reduced in a last attempt to sell. The old man offers a new price of one shilling and sixpence, which the white man pays. When he presents the Lion to his wife, expecting her praise, she is upset by what has occurred. She seems to be upset by the fact that if the Lion's price was set at three shillings and sixpence, and he had paid less than that for it, he had caused the Lion to be set at a lower value, as well. She had wanted the "Three and six" Lion, not the "One and six" Lion, and the drop in value was not just a matter of money. It was pride in craftsmanship that had

[10] There is an interesting story by Alan Paton in Trek, 15, No. 11 (November 1951) which has distinct parallels with "Another Part of the Sky."

set the value at such and such a level. To have to sell for a lower price is to have the craftsmanship devalued. This is what the girl objects to, even if she is not able, herself, to articulate it. Somehow in the process, dignity has been lost - the white man, in his bargaining, the black man in accepting a lower price, and then having to scrabble in the dust for the money thrown in haste.

"The End of the Tunnel" is a complex story that has two foci, which are not clearly linked. As a result, the story loses unity. The outline of the story is this: A girl, who is running away from an unsuccessful marriage, and her lover stop off at Nelspruit for lunch, on their way to Lourenco Marques. They meet the hotelkeeper and his wife, and after lunch continue on their way. Within this, there are two foci - the one is the character of the girl, the background of her marriage, and her reactions to her new man in the light of her husband. The second focus is a sustained investigation, through the conflicting viewpoints of four people, of the differing moral points of view they hold.

Morally, the new lover is an unconventional person. He holds to his own point of view unflinchingly, because he has absolute faith in his own decisions. "His was the tempered flesh of the religieux, who does not feel gibes, jeers or the silent mocking of commonplace because he has too much faith to see even momentarily, his belief as others see it." (SVS, p.188). He stands for the point of view that says moral values are personal. The girl's viewpoint, on the other hand, reflects conventional morality. "She would doubt herself with every doubt leveled at her, she would have misgivings with every misgiving of an old,

hard, jealous world." (SVS, p.188). Her lover says of her running away from her husband, "you're running counter to laws to which your own moral nature subscribes." (SVS, p.189). In addition to these points of view is the vague but easy-going sentimentality of the hotelkeeper, who believes that "so long as you love each other, it's O.K. I'm talking from experience." (SVS, p.191). The hotelkeeper's wife, fittingly, is presented as having a fairly matter of fact animal sensuality about her, and she has the code to match. Her husband says of her: "We each go our own way, but it's all open. I know she goes out with fellows when she's in town, and why not?" (SVS, p.188).

The questions raised by this careful laying out of variations are these: What is the meaning of morality? Is there any chance of a conclusive answer in the story? Certainly Gordimer does not seem to try to present any answer, except to say that morality does involve personal integrity, and that it has to be worked out, even at cost to oneself. The end of the tunnel, referred to in the title, seems to be the outcome of such a struggle.[11]

What does the story reveal of the character of the girl? This comes out at the end. When confronted with a moment of crisis, such as the encounter with the hotelkeeper and his wife, with its implicit moral judgements about marriage on their part, and about running away with a new lover on her part, she seems ready to collapse into her old weakness of giving in, a weakness her husband had to continue propping up. Her lover, seeing her

[11] Millar, p.50.

tears as evidence of some internal struggle, is suddenly gentle and supportive of her in a way that he had never been before. This carries her through the meal, and until they are back on the road again. Then, with something like panic, she realises that the uncharacteristic way he treated her, was reminiscent of her husband. She had been attracted to her lover precisely because he had not been gentle and supportive, with his "penetrating intuition" and "sharp logic" (SVS, p.192). She now realises that the failure of their marriage had not been her husband's fault, but hers, and she is going to do the same thing to her lover as she has done to her husband. However, that knowledge is too awesome to contain, and so she refuses to acknowledge it.

If there is a link between the two foci, it has to do with the unconscious identification, which she finds humiliating, of the hotelkeeper's wife with herself. There is a snobbery in her that can not accept the linking together of that woman, who knows nothing other than the requirements of her body, with her who holds "all the beauty of the world in her head." (SVS, p.192). The crisis that she has to face is caused by the conflict between those parts of her which reject any identification with the hotelkeeper's wife, and those which recognise and insist on the truth of it. It would seem to me that the grounds for establishing this link are not fully enough realised in the story for clarity of view. No emblematic action supports it.

Most marriages in Gordimer's stories are not fully successful and she explores many aspects of character of the parties involved. "The Hour and the Years" deals with a marriage which is failing in that it does not manage to fulfil the

expectations of the wife. Its title provides the reader with a clue as to the central structure, which is again the intersection of two planes. The one plane is the 'years' of the title, in which everyday reality predominates; the other plane is the 'hour' in which her romantic idealism elevates an encounter with her brother-in-law's friend into an experience of heightened awareness and excitement.

Gordimer deals fairly swiftly with background. She gives signals which reveal aspects of stress in the marriage (the kiss, the reminders, and the notes, the dog), and explains the background of the wife's weekly lunch with her brother-in-law, Lewis, and his friends. Paul, the special friend, is introduced, and then the story moves into the central action. On this particular day, Lewis at the last moment finds he is unable to come. This leaves the wife and Paul to share their meal alone. The meal goes well, and the wife finds her perception of her surroundings being raised above their normal pitch. "There was a curious sense of growing awareness in her." (SVS, p.40). The tension between them grows. Gordimer slows down the pace of the action, and increases the intensity of the wife's perception. "She felt that though he sat across the table from her, she could feel him breathing close to her, see the detail of the shining brown pupils of his eyes. She was aware of the faint warm essence breathed from the pores of the skin of his cheeks." (SVS, p.41). In the midst of this, she remains constantly aware of the situation she is in, her married home, her husband's irritating traits, the dog; but this is to no avail. When he kisses her, she responds. Their encounter is imbued with dreamlike

qualities, and they break out of the commonplace world into a 'bubble' of romantic idealism. Then, outside the house, the wife's dog is run over, and their 'bubble' is broken by the demands of the everyday world. When the dog has been attended to, there is no chance of their recovering the moment, because it had passed, and so they part. Slowly, the wife returns to the world again. Her elation subsides and she cannot quite understand why nothing had changed because of it. She feels cheated because she wanted change. But because nothing does change, she grows into a gentle resignation "almost succeeding in forgetting that she had wanted so much for it to be different." (SVS, p.47). Gordimer again accelerates the pace until the ending. When the wife sees Paul again, years later, he seems a stranger, yet vaguely familiar, like a person once noticed in a photograph.

The story succeeds because its structure is well suited to its theme: a moment in time is opposed to the slow sweep of time. Gordimer's vivid evocations of the wife's 'hour' allow the reader chance to experience her heightened awareness. The story is, in fact, in thematic terms, what the rest of her stories are structurally - a moment of insight, of heightened awareness, located inside the commonplace.

The next four stories are not successful. Gordimer does not seem to have used their patterns, tones or moods again. They are romantic, sentimental, and lack the precision and clarity that characterise her better work.

The most obviously atypical story is the romantic and idealistic "Treasures of the Sea". It is a love story; the tone

is quiet, gentle and sensuous. There is a rhythmic quality to the sentences, which gives a sense of peace and quiet.[12] The narrative is indirect, and the details of the human component are vague and illusive. A girl grows up close to the sea, and her whole being is encompassed by it. She meets a man "whose idea of her was so much what she wanted herself to be that she fell deeply in love with him." (SVS, p.72). They become engaged (with a pearl ring), and while she waits for him to conclude his business deal elsewhere, she returns to her place of origin. There she is drowned in the sea - the sea reclaiming its own - death completing the triad of the mystic fascination, the ideal love, and extinction. "The sea kept its treasures to itself." (SVS, p.71,72). She is so identified as a sea creature that she has to return there for completion, and so become a treasure of the sea itself.

"A Present for a Good Girl" is a sad story, involving a mother and daughter conflict caused by misunderstanding, embarrassment, shame and lack of contact. It concerns the attempts by the old woman, to buy, on lay-by, a handbag for her daughter. The old woman is an alcoholic, and the daughter has tried to separate herself from her mother in her attempts to better herself. The mother's mixture of pathetic pride in her daughter, and her lack of pride in herself combine into an interesting portrait, which Gordimer spends a lot of time drawing especially in the use of characterising dialogue. Where the story falls

[12]Millar, p.41.

short, is in the ending. The moment of truth is too slight. The shame and anger of the daughter in having to 'bail out' her mother yet again are well drawn, but her mistake in thinking that the bag is intended for her mother, and not for herself, does not validate the extended preparation.

"The Talisman" is another romantic story, in which a favourite dress becomes specially identified with the owner. Like the portrait in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, the dress records deterioration in the owner's spiritual state. The story sprawls and seems to lack a focus. It starts with the narrator describing how a special dress of her grandmother's becomes endowed with special qualities for her as a young girl. She thought the dress untouchable, and yet, after her grandmother's death, it is sold. Later, she saw it being worn by a 'native girl'. This, she says, was the moment when she became a grown-up; in other words, when some precious symbol of childhood had been desecrated, abused. Then the story seems to start again; this time with the narrator's developing a similar link with a dress of her own.

It is worn at key points in her life: at her wedding, during her early married life, and at an exhibition where she meets an old lover after a long absence. From this meeting develops the affair which finally brings her to the divorce court, wearing the same dress. By now, the dress is a bit worn, and a bit tatty, and beginning to come apart. The symbolism is not that subtle.

In "A Commonplace Story", the lesson to be learnt - 'once a music teacher, always a music teacher' - is too banal to sustain

the interest over the length of time the story takes to read. It centres on Agnes Bretherton, a nondescript person and an average music teacher. She marries a shabby little mechanic, and thoughout her life, maintains an unvarying stream of music pupils who seem to be uniformly uninspiring and imprisoning.

The only interesting departure in this story is a section of the story, set in italics to separate it from the rest, where a whimsical account of her elevation to heaven follows an accident in which she is involved. This account shows her to be condemned to music teaching in heaven as well. The story ends with her returning to consciousness on earth, and giving instructions about her pupils. It is an odd experiment, one which Gordimer does not return to.

It is not difficult to see why three stories from Face to-Face were not included in the next collection. With the possible exceptions of "Treasures of the Sea", "The Talisman" and "A Commonplace Story", all the stories of The Soft Voice of the Serpent have a moment of insight as a structural component of the story. That is to say, the type of story that seemed to be the most successful for Gordimer's purposes, was one in which a glimpse of a specific encounter reveals some insight which illuminates character, or mood, or idea. The three stories that she chose to leave out, "The Battlefield at No. 29", "The Last of the Old Fashioned Girls", and "No Luck Tonight", are all 'plot' stories, which rely on a clever twist in the ending to make the story's impact. The realisations which occur are usually about something trivial, or peripheral, and usually not about the central character of the story. The characterisation is

ineffective, because one gets the impression that the characters exist for the sake of the storyline, rather than the story itself existing for the revelation of character. But the execution of these stories is no less satisfactory than the execution of the other stories. Their faults are a consequence of what they do not attempt to do.

"The Battlefield at No. 29" concerns three people - a Scottish emigrant to South Africa, his mother, and the Afrikaans girl that the Scotsman married. A close relationship exists between mother and son. The mother visits her son three times a week, and when she is with him, their conversation more or less excludes the wife. This situation has been going on for some time, yet the wife seems to accept it, and the husband-wife relationship endures. It seems, however, to be both a colourless and pointless relationship, which has as a basis a convention of good behaviour rather than any form of love. The story centres on the mother's illness, which entails her moving in with the married pair, and in the wife looking after her. She recovers, miraculously, but the daughter, always the picture of robust good health, contracts typhoid and dies. The mother then moves in with her son. Our expectation all along was that the mother would die, and then presumably, some attention could be paid to the husband-wife relationship. But this expectation is reversed, and the status quo is retained and even enhanced. Structurally, the story is weak and the characterisation is wooden and unconvincing.

"The Last of the Old-Fashioned Girls" is a story of an

encounter in which no learning is possible because the only outcome can be one which was determined before the story started. The narrator meets a beautiful girl on the beach and talks to her. She, lying with one side of her face on the towel, tells him of her understanding of life, of her ideals and her desires - all of which reveal her to be 'one of the old-fashioned girls'. In particular, she rejects all notions of fame and glory - all she wants is a family. The narrator considers this to be an ambition easily within her reach, until she gets up at the end of the conversation and he sees that her face is 'disfigured' by an enormous birthmark down the side of her face that she had been concealing by lying on it. The story's weakness is its predetermination. Nothing said or done during the encounter can change the inevitable outcome. The reader feels cheated, deprived of the chance for insight, because there is none.

"No Luck Tonight" is possibly the best of these three, because the characterisation is convincing. The narrator and his wife have their evening interrupted by the Civic Guard who want to search the servant's quarters for illicit beer. The Civic Guard search in all the spots they can think of, but find nothing but the remains, and that is not enough. They even search the cupboard of the maid servant, having obtained a key from her as she sat in the kitchen, doing the darning. When the Guard leave, the white narrator returns to the house, carefully avoiding the kitchen door. He knows that going that way, he will encounter the maid carrying the beer which they were indeed selling, back from its hiding place in the pile of clothing that needed repair, to her quarters. The twist in the ending is a

weakness because the narrator knew where the beer was hidden as soon as he saw the maid doing the darning, because she had never done that before, but he did not reveal that. The ending then becomes contrived, and in terms of Gordimer's usual story construction, that is a weakness.

These twenty four stories constitute a solid base for the development of Gordimer's writing. In them are contained basic patterns that re-emerge in a more refined form in later stories. Among them also are the experiments that are given a trial and then discarded. The Soft Voice of the Serpent sets the course for her succeeding collections, and it reveals also the sorts of thematic emphases that will predominate in her later writing.

These early stories reveal the themes that have constantly occupied her attention. There are some stories in which personal growth is revealed by incidents or realisations during which insight is gained or forced upon a person. These stories have a largely private emphasis, and they contrast markedly with the other groups of stories which deal with the political realities of race and the colour bar, the public domain within which Gordimer has lived. Gordimer repeatedly presents situations that reveal and expose the facades that people erect around themselves, in self-delusion, or to avoid the external realities which confront and threaten their weaknesses.

Within these major areas of preoccupation, Gordimer deals with a number of themes in various combinations. These include the growth of self-awareness; disillusionment as both a destructive and constructive experience; marriage (or more specifically

the failing marriage); and the interaction, often seen as conflict, between parent and child. The effect of the colour prejudices held by whites is one of the public themes, but even in these stories, as required by the nature of the short story, Gordimer pays more attention to filling in the individual encounter than explaining the general condition of prejudice.

It would leave the chapter incomplete if something was not mentioned of the characteristics of the actual writing itself. That her writing is packed with intense detail has been a feature noted by many critics right from the start.[13] The wealth of detail is usually relevant to the action, or reflective of it, and thus appropriate. However, when the detail is indulged in and is not related to the action, the story is drowned by the flood of impressions. Her descriptions are intense, so much so that sometimes the sheer quantity of detail makes her prose awkward or laboured. Her treatment of dialogue is simple, and only in some places does she use dialogue itself as a characterising device, as in "Monday is Better than Sunday", or "A Present for a Good Girl". She does show an impatience with the conventions of punctuation in direct speech - a trend that develops in the later stories.

Some revealing comparisons can be made between the stories of these collections, and the four very early stories which were published in magazines and then not included in the collections. The reason for their exclusion is, according to Gordimer, simply

[13] Anthony Delius, "Danger from the Digit," Standpunte, 7, No. 3 (1953), p.90.

that they are not good enough.[14] Her first story, "Come Again Tomorrow"[15] is more a sketch than a story. An old man, lonely now his wife has died and his sons have left home, finds that it is only when one son becomes involved in an "ugly financial scandal" that he is able to help, and in that way feel wanted again. His daughter-in-law invites him to "come again tomorrow". The next story, "No Place Like Home",[16] is largely made up of an extended conversation in a pub between servicemen far from home and loved ones. Characterisation is slight, with even the names the characters are given portraying the arm of the service they belong to rather than any specific human feature, i.e. the Raf, or the Tank Corps corporal. Where some human feature is alluded to, as with "the red-headed sailor", the character becomes more alive for us. Again, the story is slight because there is no action except the story being told by the Raf, which has little connection with the situation on the surface of the story, the interaction of men in the pub. "Poet and Peasant"[17] is a complex account of a father and son who in spite of apparent differences are very similar. The son, a poet, is romanticised as being dreamy and sensitive - his father is coarse and brutish. Yet the woman involved with the son finds out to her amazement

14 Unpublished interview between Nadine Gordimer and Michael King on 11 January 1984.

15 Nadine Gordimer, "Come Again Tomorrow" Forum, 2, 34 (19 February 1939), p.14.

16 Nadine Gordimer, "No Place Like Home" P.S., 2, No. 5 (December 1943), pp.7-8.

17 Nadine Gordimer, "Poet and Peasant" Hasholom, 28, No. 1 (September 1949), pp.26-31,47.

how like the son the father is, and how similar the boy is to his father. The story fails because it is too extended and diffuse, lacking the necessary conciseness of the short story. "A Sunday Outing" [18] has too big a gap between the action of the story, and the realisation the story leads to of the emptiness and sterility of the life of the speaker. There is too much detail presented which has too little bearing on the realisation achieved by the ending of the story. These stories fail because there is insufficient integration of action and realisation and so the unity of effect is lost. They are stories flawed by features which are slightly out of control. The detail is too profuse, the presentation is too reportlike, the conversation too bookish. Yet there is also clear evidence of features which, when controlled, become some of Gordimer's strengths, for example, the almost poetic quality of some of her descriptions which operate both at a literal and a metaphorical level, as in "The knees were brown and round, the flesh as softly-firm as the flesh of one of those peaches from which the thin furred skins peels perfectly." [19]

The Soft Voice of the Serpent marks Gordimer's arrival as a short story writer. Some of the stories from this collection have remained anthology favourites to this day, and they generally meet the highest requirements of the short story form. The development that takes place was not to be a simple improvement, but a deepening subtlety and control.

[18] Nadine Gordimer, "A Sunday Outing" Trek, 15, No. 10 (October 1951), pp.8-9.

[19] Nadine Gordimer, "A Sunday Outing" Trek 15, No. 10 (October 1951), p.9.

CHAPTER THREE

SIX FEET OF THE COUNTRY

Six Feet of the Country, published in 1956 contains stories written between that date and the date of publication of her previous collection in 1953. The stories reveal an increasing complexity in technique and structure, and a more subtle, more analytical treatment of themes than had been the case in The Soft Voice of the Serpent.

Gordimer deals with the same basic themes as in her earlier stories; the area of race differences and people's reactions to them; the insights that occur in the growing up process; and the deceptions and illusions that are employed to ward off the too unpleasant aspects of reality and the human condition. However, there are significant changes and developments in the treatment of these themes.

When dealing with race in The Soft Voice of the Serpent, Gordimer's stories were constructed around racial barriers that prevent proper human interaction. Because of these barriers, people retreat into cold and stereotyped reactions and are left, often entirely unperceiving of the nature of their responses. The barrier is seen to be 'something out there' - it is an omnipresent but generally uncritically accepted aspect of 'the way things are'. With the exception of "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?" the barrier is not understood, nor hardly even questioned, and the stories proceed from that point, i.e.

the stories accept the barrier as given, and work on people's interactions and responses thereafter.

In the five race stories in this collection, external differences are not dwelt on to the same extent. Gordimer instead presents the barrier as something inside the characters, usually the white characters. A story like "Happy Event" seems to go out of its way to make the point that the two women, Ella Plaistow and Lena, are exactly the same - they both dispose of 'unwanted babies'. The barrier to mutual sympathy is not something extrinsic to the women, but is a condition within Ella Plaistow, who judges Lena to be barbarous and unfeeling. Similarly a barrier does exist between Jennifer Tetzel and Jake Alexander in "Which New Era Would That Be?" but it arises out of Jennifer's insistence that there are no differences, despite the evidence to the contrary that the story presents. It would seem that in this collection, Gordimer is trying to analyse the nature of the barrier in her race stories, rather than just presenting the barrier as a reprehensible but inevitable component of the South African reality.

Two stories deal with childhood and growing up, and both of them have first person narrators. The differences between narrating self and experiencing self are clearly maintained, thus avoiding the problems with authorial intrusion (as happened in "The Soft Voice of the Serpent") which can occur when narration of events and reflection on them are mingled.

The stories that deal with deception reveal an increasing sensitivity towards the ways in which self-deception is both revealed and concealed; unwittingly exposed, yet persistently

unacknowledged.

Along with these developments in her approach to themes, Gordimer also reveals various advances in technical aspects of her short story writing. Firstly, the structures of these stories are now combinations of the patterns that occurred in her previous work. Instead of the stories developing along the lines established by the earlier stories, Gordimer seems to take two or three of her earlier patterns and blend them into a much denser and more complex arrangement. This is possible because she exerts better control over her narrative voice, which, as a cohesive agent, now becomes much more important. The narrator often plays two roles - those of narrator proper and of reflector, and in a way, this is an advance in that Gordimer seems more assured now in her authorial position, and so uses it to better effect.

Allied to that shift in the role of the narrator is a deliberate use of point of view manipulation in two stories, in such a way as to manipulate the reader's sympathy for the characters in the stories.

The third of the technical advances is the tentative trial she makes of the thematic treatment of narrative situations in the stories. In only one story, "Horn of Plenty", is the use of the narrative situation of central thematic concern, in that the theme (the race barrier) is revealed through two different methods of presenting the consciousness of two characters separated by the race barrier. In most of the other stories, Gordimer only uses these devices tentatively and with peripheral

importance to the central concern of the story. It is necessary now to introduce certain terms which are used in the analysis of narrative situations.[1]

The primary distinction is between report-like presentation and scenic presentation, and the difference is in the author's presence or absence from the narrative (i.e. the author's visibility). As this can only be approximately known, we talk of the author's either emerging or withdrawing from the course of narration. If the author does emerge, then we talk of authorial narration. If the reader has the illusion of being present in the scene, in one of the figures, then figural narration is taking place. In figural narration, the narrator strives for sovereign freedom from the fictional world, and for temporal, spatial and psychological distance from it. This narrative distance is important.

> The authorial novel is narrated in the third person. The author himself seems to enter as narrator. From the narrative situation, the reader derives his expectation of certain kinds of illusion. In order to meet this illusion expectancy; or to circumvent it without the reader's notice; or in order to play with it artistically, authors have varied, concealed, or disguised the authorial narrative situation in numerous ways.
>
> In contrast to the first person narrator, the typical authorial narrator stands outside the

[1] All the terms and the theoretical framework come from Frans Stanzel's and Dorrit Cohn's work on narrative situations in novels: Frans Stanzel, Narrative Situations in the Novel, trans. James P. Pusack (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971); Dorrit Cohn, Transparent Minds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

> realm of existence of the fictional world. The authorial narrator may appear transformed or disguised as the editor of a manuscript, or as a reporter and chronicler of an event supposedly communicated to him by an eye-witness or participant, and so forth.[2]

Most of Gordimer's short stories are characterised by predominantly authorial narrative - in fact, she very seldom transforms her narrator, and seems quite happy to present unadorned authorial narration.

The first person narrative situation can sometimes be seen as a special case of authorial narration, in which the realm of narrator and his fictional world are not separated. In some instances, the narrating self can be as distant from the experiencing self as a typical narrator would be from the fictional world he is talking about. In other instances, the narrating and experiencing selves can come very close together, and this situation could be viewed as paralleling third person figural narration.

In both first and third person narration, there are various means of presenting the consciousness of the experiencing character to the reader. Again, as with narration, the presence or absence of the author influences the immediacy with which we encounter the consciousness being presented. According to Cohn, the three methods are: Psycho-narration, in which the narrator explains the consciousness of the character without attempting to

[2] Frans Stanzel, p.38.

assume the imagery or syntax of the character's consciousness. It can be glossed as "authorial orientation in the description of inner events."[3] However, this technique often gives way to the more immediate and compelling techniques of monologue - either as Quoted monologue, or Narrated monologue. Quoted monologue occurs when the characters talk or think to themselves, either out loud, or silently. These Quoted monologues are most clearly indicated by the signals, "he said", or "he thought to himself", or even by conventional quotation marks, or, if without any punctuation, by the change in tense, to the Present tense, and the change from third person to first person. Narrated monologue "may be most succinctly defined as the technique for rendering a character's thought in his own idiom while maintaining the third person reference and the basic tense of narration."[4] Of the three techniques, Narrated monologue is both the most complex and the most flexible for presenting consciousness, while yet maintaining the narrative role.

In first person narration, the pattern is similar. Consonant and dissonant self-narration correspond roughly with the distinction between authorial and figural narration in third person narration. Dissonant self-narration has a large narrative distance between narrating self and experiencing self, while consonant self-narration attempts a more immediate depiction of the self's inner life as it is occurring. There are techniques

[3] Cohn, p.29

[4] Cohn, p.100

called Self-quoted monologue, and Self-narrated monologue, which parallel the techniques in third person narration. Self-quoted monologue poses some problems because it is difficult to recognise which is the experiencing self in monologue, and which the narrating self, unless the text is cluttered up with inquit phrases, so it is not extensively used. And self narrated monologue is useful to give the author opportunity to give up temporarily his advantage point of experience in order to recreate the innocence, or bewilderment of young people.

This short description in no way attempts to encapsulate the work of Stanzel and Cohn, but is intended solely as introduction to various terms that will be used in analysis in this and succeeding chapters.

There are five stories that deal with race in this collection. The title story, "Six Feet of the Country," reveals a barrier between white and black with no attempt at explaining it, or revealing the underlying components, so in that, it is fairly close to the stories on a racial theme in the earlier collections. However, it has a very much more complex structure, and the role that the first person narrator plays is also a significant development. A businessman who lives on a smallholding which his wife runs, is told that an illegal immigrant, a relative of one of the labourers, has died on the smallholding. The ensuing action reveals the two responses (black and white) to death. The white man goes through the necessary procedures required by law - police notification, post-mortem on the body, certificates, pauper's burial, and for him,

everything is "suitably disposed of".[5] But this is unacceptable to the blacks, who want the body so that the father of the dead man (who has travelled down from Rhodesia) can bury the body properly. Grudgingly and expensively, the coffin is produced, but it turns out that it does not contain the right body. For the first time, the white man's emotions are involved, and he tries to get hold of the right body, but to no avail. As a sop, the wife of the white man gives the old man a suit.

The treatment that this outline receives is what complicates the story. Firstly it is told in the first person, from a securely distanced point of view. "It was because of this that we were not particularly startled one night last winter when ..." (SFC, p.10). There are two time dimensions in the story; the present tense when the narrator is reflecting on relationships, his present way of life, himself; and the past tense when he is acting as (in effect) an authorial narrator. The present tense - the comment - is firmly established in the reader's mind by the first two pages. Then the reference to 'last winter' puts the events into the narrative distance, and the two dimensions move along - often side by side, as he narrates and then reflects on aspects of the story or the behaviour of people in it.

> "You would think they would have felt they could tell us," said Lerice next morning. "Once the man was ill. You would have thought at least - " When she is getting intense over something, she has a way of

[5] Nadine Gordimer, Six Feet of the Country (London: Gollancz, 1956), p.13. (All succeeding page references will be included in the text.)

> standing in the middle of a room as people do when they are shortly to leave on a journey, looking searchingly about her at the most familiar objects as if she had never seen them before. I had noticed that in Petrus's presence in the kitchen, earlier, she had the air of being almost offended with him, almost hurt. (SFC, p.12)

The underlined portion is present tense reflection on a long standing habit of Lerice. The other portions are straightforward narrative. In both dimensions, he reveals certain failures in himself without even being aware of it. He says: "you seem to rattle about so much with a marriage like ours." (SFC, p.8), or:

> But even in our saner moments, when I find Lerice's earthly enthusiasms just as irritating as I once found her histrionic ones, and she finds what she calls my 'jealousy' of her capacity for enthusiasm as big a proof of my inadequacy for her as a mate as ever it was ... (SFC, p.9)

and then later on:

> On five pounds a month, Petrus won't have twenty pounds - and just as well, since it couldn't do the dead any good. Certainly I should not offer it to him myself. (SFC, p.14)

This process of revelation goes on throughout the story, ending with a comment from the narrator (in lieu of an emblematic action) which reveals the inadequacy of the man's insight and humanity. This becomes all the more damning in the light of his professions of liberal sympathy for the blacks.

> The old man from Rhodesia was about Lerice's father's size, so she gave him one of her father's old suits and he went back home rather better off, for the winter, than he had come. (SFC, p.20)

This comment, 'rather better off' captures very succinctly the differences between the two points of view. In one sense, of course, he is better off - by a suit. But that gain is in no way compensation for the fact that he has lost a son - not just that the son has died, but that he was also not able to bury him according to his own rituals. What the comment reveals is that the white man is too blind to see that.

That then is the first structural pattern that can be seen - the continual revelation of character as the story unfolds. That it is revelation of self adds irony to the telling. It is significant that the sharp ending, which before had been expressed solely in some action or other, is now a part of the narration - significant because it recognises the increased importance that begins to be attached to the narrative situation.

The second structural pattern is the interaction of two conflicting planes - the white and the black treatment of death.

> Just like the poor everywhere, I thought, who stint themselves to the decencies of life in order to insure themselves the decencies of death. So incomprehensible to people like Lerice and me, who regard life as something to be spent extravagantly, and, if we think about death at all, regard it as the final bankruptcy. (SFC, p.15)

The treatment of death involves how you treat life as well, and the story is clearly an examination of the failure of white liberals ("In fact, we've always rather prided ourselves that the poor devils have nothing to fear, being with us; Lerice even keeps an eye on their children ..." (SFC, p.10), to respond with

humanity and sympathy to a crisis among their black neighbours. Their 'liberalism' is not integrated in that their behaviour belies the principles they believe they hold.

"Happy Event" goes beyond a simple presentation of the race barrier into an analysis of the motivations of the people involved in the situation. The situation is a paralleling of two different reactions to essentially the same human condition - an unwanted pregnancy. The differences result from the differing economic and status groups into which the two women fall, and they fall into those groups as a result of differences in race. ("Ah, Woe is Me" and "Monday is Better than Sunday" are constructed around differences. "Happy Event" is based on the similarities between the women, even though their responses to the situation are different.)

Once again the narrative situation plays an important part in shaping the story. Essentially the story has two planes, but for thematic reasons, the one plane is only obliquely referred to. After Ella Plaistow returns from the nursing home where she had had an abortion (so that their overseas trip would not be interrupted) their maid does not come to work one day. The gardener complained darkly of voices in the night from Lena's room, and this is explained a week later after a dead child is disocovered in the veld, wrapped in one of Ella Plaistow's cast-offs which she had given to Lena. There is an investigation and a trial, and Lena gets six months - ironically the same length of time that the Plaistows' overseas trip lasted.

The balance between the two planes (that of the Plaistow's: sterile, morally questionable, self-indulgent; and Lena's: a

woman without money, without recourse to nursing homes, who can't afford the façade of morality) is indirect. The story is told mainly through Ella Plaistow's point of view, but only indirectly is reference made to her activities. On the other hand, the incidents of Lena's story are related fully by the narrator, but never once is Lena's point of view reflected. She remains an unknown figure, and our reaction to her is based only on the comments and value judgements that Ella and her friends pass on Lena. The result of that indirect balance is almost antithetical to what one would expect. The narration, coming from Ella's point of view, tries to justify Ella, and to put Lena in as bad a light as possible. At no stage is Ella's abortion directly mentioned - it is only euphemistically hinted at. "So to have allowed themselves to be stopped by this - " (SFC, p.33), or "She was just beginning to feel really strong again - undoubtedly that business had left her a little weak ..." (SFC, p. 33). Lena is described (from Ella's perspective) as "sullen", with a "closed-in solemnity" (SFC, p.34), and after the death of the baby is revealed, she is seen as "not a motherly figure" (SFC, p.43), then she is transformed into "the ghoulish creature who emerged out of discussion of the affair" (SFC, p.45), and finally, "A murderer, nothing less." (SFC, p.45). But the story leaves us with exactly the opposite sympathies. We quickly see that in terms of the actions, both women are equally at fault, both equally guilty of disposing of an unwanted baby. But the motivation of each is such that we condemn Ella Plaistow, and have sympathy for Lena. Ella's abortion occurs mainly because she and her husband do not

want their special treat, the overseas trip/holiday, to be spoiled. And that is the point where the barrier exists. Ella can get her abortion, pay for it and quickly adjust to it, because as a white person, her status is privileged. Lena's child is the victim of need, of lack of facilities that might have given the child a prospect of life as a human being. As it is, the 'cat' imagery employed here is disturbing in its implications - which are that Lena is more animal than human. When Ella visits Lena's room to see her, "the room had a warm animal smell, like the inside of the cupboard when old Lixi, the tabby lay with her kittens at her belly, purring and licking ..." (SFC, p.37). When Big Charlie finds the dead baby in the veld, "he saw that this was hardly a child at all; was, now, closer to those kittens he was sometimes ordered by his employers to drown in a bucket of water." (SFC, p.40).

The extent to which this story is more complicated than, say, "The Catch" is in the way in which the narrator's role penetrates the moral components of the two planes that interact. In "The Catch", we are presented with two planes, and we feel that the whites are more to blame for the awkwardness at the end. In this story, we cannot avoid at least recognising this question: 'Who is to blame, or who is absolved from blame?' and answering it in Ella's favour rather than in Lena's. The arrangement of the narrative situation, the total avoidance of Lena's point of view, the concentration on Ella's and the revealing of the hypocrisy of the whites (in blaming Lena for doing something that they too had done), all have the effect of

manipulating our sympathy in favour of Lena. And the irony of the title seems to refer more pertinently to Ella than to Lena.

"Which New Era Would That Be?" can clearly be seen to follow the structural pattern of 'Introduction', 'Moment of High Intensity', and 'Emblematic Action'. There is also an element of another pattern though; the interaction of two planes even though this pattern is apparent mainly by implication.

Centred on Jake Alexander, the story deals with the interaction of Jake and his friends, especially Maxie Dhube, and Jennifer Tetzel, a white liberal woman and her journalist escort, Alistair Halford. What is under examination is Jennifer Tetzel's 'liberalism' which constitutes the one plane of the interaction, and the attitudes held by the blacks, which form the other plane of the interaction. The blacks hold two attitudes. Jake Alexander, "a big fat slob of a coloured man interested in women, brandy and boxing" (SFC, p.84) "had decided long ago ... that he would take the whole business of the colour bar as humorous" (SFC, p.89). On the other hand, his friends are actively involved in improving the lot of black people. Temba had been a delegate to the Congress, and Maxie Dhube is an organiser of African Trade Unions.

During the introductory phase of the story, the narrator establishes Jake and Jennifer, through Jake's eyes. She is seen disparagingly - Jake "knew her type well." (SFC, p.83). "These were the white women who, Jake knew, persisted in regarding themselves are your equal" (SFC, p.83). "They thought they understood the humiliation ..." (SFC, p.84). "They even insisted on feeling the resentment <u>you</u> must feel at their identifying

themselves with your feelings..." (SFC, p.84). What is being objected to is not the fact that the woman chooses to involve herself in black affairs, but that in doing so, she is not allowing the situation to influence her at all. She maintains adamantly her own very determined point of view, despite whatever evidence is thrown at her. She lacks the sensitivity to understand the people she works with, because she is not really interested in seeing things through their perspective at all. And if there is a barrier, this is it. Jake Alexander is determinedly non-racial in the pursuit of his life (or pleasures, as they are for him, synonymous), so whatever misunderstandings occur, occur because of Jennifer Tetzel's closed mind.

The story starts moving towards the moment of high intensity when Maxie Dhube starts talking. No clash could occur between Jennifer and Jake, because Jake would not be manoeuvred into one. However, Maxie is serious, intent, and so a clash between him and Jennifer is likely. That is why the black plane is not represented by one person. Through Maxie comes the action and the tension; through Jake the reaction and the release of tension. The initial sparring between Maxie and Jennifer ends with Jennifer's claiming that her involvement in black social work was prompted by guilt. The narrator does not allow the reader to have any sympathy for Jennifer, by having Jennifer acknowledge "the feebleness, the philanthropic uselessness of what she was saying" (SFC, p.88). If the fight is for the reader's sympathy, Maxie wins that bout. "Maxie shrugged, as if at the mention of some expensive illness, which he had never been able to afford and

whose symptoms he could not imagine." (SFC, p.88).

Jennifer reacts to Maxie's story of the receptionist by saying: "It's hard to be punished for not being black." (SFC, p.94). What she means is that the receptionist, after liking Maxie's voice on the phone, and wanting to extend the contact, suddenly finds out that Maxie is black, and so she cannot continue because she is not black as well. Neither Jake nor Maxie react with anger to this - Jake because he had given it up long ago, and Maxie because he did not give up "his suffering blackness so easily." (SFC, p.95). Yet both feel that there is something exceptional about the blindness of the white girl. She is blind because she does not see that it is not because the receptionist is not black that the encounter ends, but because she is white, riddled with all the self-imposed restraints that whites have accepted for themselves in spite of their humanity, in pursuit of the apartheid society.

Anger does result through Jennifer's reaction to the other story that Maxie tells. When they leave, Jennifer turns to Maxie to tell him that she does not believe his story. She was, according to her lights, being honest. Her respect for him demanded such honesty, even if the honesty produced a comment such as the one that is made. Not to believe the story, and then not to indicate such disbelief, would be a betrayal of her respect for him. Her implication is that the story was made up so that Maxie could show how impolite, how inhuman whites are. What in fact her comment does, is reveal again her inadequacy. Jennifer does not perceive the paradox. By saying she does not believe his story, she is calling him a liar, giving him an insult. If the

story was true the whites did behave badly in their treatment of Maxie. If it was not true, and Jennifer accuses Maxie of lying, the whites are still behaving badly in their treatment of Maxie. But Jennifer doesn't see that, and so she blunders into the insult. Maxie, knowing his story to be true, does not have to respond. But Jake lacks Maxie's calm, and in a perfect emblematic action, after Jennifer and Alister have left, kicks over the chair that Jennifer had been sitting on, thus expressing his anger and releasing the tension. The story works so well because the organic structure of the story fits perfectly into the two patterns that Gordimer uses. The portrayal of Jennifer Tetzel shows again how Gordimer is attempting to explain how the legally imposed separations within South African society produce in people an internalised barrier that prevents human and positive communication between black and white people.

"The Smell of Death and Flowers" is an ambitious story that does not conform with any of the patterns already used. Briefly stated, it is the story of Joyce McCoy, who meets the organisers of a passive resistance campaign at a party, and finds out to her surprise that they are people just as she herself is. They make a big impact on her, especially Jessica Malherbe, and she is determined to join their movement. When she is accepted into the organisation, and is preparing for the illegal march, she experiences a flashback to a traumatic encounter of her childhood, prompted by the smell of incense and flowers. She panics, and it is only her code of good manners that forces her to go through with the march. When she is arrested, she finds the experience

meaningless. Yet, in that moment, she is able to feel with the blacks, who watch the arrest, a sense of what being black in a South Africa dominated by whites must feel like. And it is in this sympathetic identification with a black situation that Joyce McCoy is special. What she has done, is what Jessica Malherbe had done, and that is to have broken down a race barrier. This story is thematically significant for one other reason. In Jessica Malherbe, Gordimer presents a person at whom no criticism direct or implied is levelled for her position on race. In her idealism, her matter of fact, non-complaining stance, she seems to acquire Gordimer's tacit approval. (In this, she prefigures the more developed character Anna Louw, in A World of Strangers.) Jessica Malherbe is Afrikaans, but she has discarded the limits of that background in order to be her own person. Her marriage to Rajati is not held up as a model, but does show her willingness to be committed to an institution and yet to rise above race in being so committed.

The structure of the story seems to have two components. At the party, there is an intensity of realisation that pushes that experience into high focus. Out of Joyce's realization at the party comes the motive for action, and the action itself forms the second clearly delineated focus. The full realisation occurs at the end of the action. In one sense the structure stretches beyond the limits of a short story. The party, being almost a story in its own right has a decisive effect on Joyce, and she develops as a result of it. She determines to follow a new course of action as a result of what she learns at the party. The second half also is almost a story on its own. In other

words, the "unity of effect or impression", one of the essential artistic demands of a short story, is not respected here.[6] The link between the two halves is the flashback, which occurs in the party, and then resurfaces at the house of Rajati's mother. The title of the story is a reference to the flashback, so Gordimer is obviously using the title to highlight the centrality of this particular linking device.

The story called "Horn of Plenty" needs special consideration. It is a portrait of a spoilt, self-indulgent American woman in South Africa, and her relationship with her servant, Rebecca. Rebecca is very good as a servant, but she does not play the role of flatterer, confidante and companion that Pat wants. And Pat needs it - because of her own instability and moodiness.

The story is special because manipulation of the narrative situation occurs with thematic intent - the barrier between white and black is the theme of the story, and the presentation of the consciousnesses of both Pat and Rebecca occurs in such a way that the theme is indicated by the different methods of presenting consciousness.

The narration is predominantly authorial in that there are a number of specifically authorial distancing comments - made on the characters, the South African context generally - and also comment which could not have come from any of the story's characters.

[6] See the discussion on this point in the Introduction p.5.

> ... as if the magazines, the radios and the cameras had listened in to the confused sleep of missions who were troubled in the new world by hunger-dreams of the old world, and had created out of these half-valid dreams an ideal American desire and an ideal American fulfilment - wealth, beauty, if not fame itself, then a chance to be bracketed, within a gossip column, at lunch with the famous. Not (though it is fashionable, with a sneer, to call it that) quite the American dream, but the garbled version of it that one would expect eaves-dropping magazines, radios and cameras to pick up and impose upon a people. (SFC, p.117, 118)

There are passages which are figural narration - with Pat as figure (SFC, p.116) and with Rebecca as figure (SFC, p.119,120). In these predominantly figural passages, Gordimer attempts to reveal the consciousness of each of the two women, but she does it selectively, and for thematic effect. Rebecca's consciousness is revealed mainly through psycho-narration. "And she thought she knew what they wanted of you, by now. She didn't pretend to understand them; that she'd given up after the first year, of course. But she certainly thought she knew what they wanted, and how much ..." (SFC, p.119). (This is not pure psycho-narration - the 'you' and the succeeding sentence are more like narrated monologue than psycho-narration, but they occur in the midst of this predominantly authorial commentary.) Most of Rebecca's characterisation is done by the narrator directly, although the narrator does from time to time introduce signals that are 'borrowed' or adapted from Rebecca's own verbal usages. ("Oh, she had worked for people ... (SFC, p.123), or "She left a good job to come to the McCleary's because they, in their foreign ignorance, offered her ..." (SFC, p.123).) And then lastly, there are a few, but only a few places where the author uses narrated

monologue to get a clear glimpse of Rebecca's consciousness. ("Sheets!" and "Extraordinary!" (SFC, p.124).)

The treatment of Pat on the other hand is less authorial. On at least two occasions, extended passages of narrated monologue are used to convey the inner workings of Pat's consciousness.

> "There you are, darling," said Hank, "She even makes coffee just the way you like it." It was, of course, no mean consolation to Pat, in a town where, wherever you went, you were offered cups of milky Indian tea. The only thing was, Rebecca never seemed to sense when you wanted to have a cup of hot coffee brought to you; if you told her, three times a day, or every hour, she would bring it to you on the dot, but she never simply walked in bearing a steaming cup, just when you happened to be dying for it. (SFC, p.125)

These passages (there is another long passage of narrated monologue on p.128) reveal the very innermost workings of Pat's consciousness. As such, they offer the reader penetrating insight into her personality. Hers is not an outgoing love - other people must love her, must understand her. Hank does not understand this aspect of her, and because he does not see through her, he is able to marry her. "Hank was always on the trail, but somehow never caught up and found her out." (SFC, p.128). The ending of the story - words spoken by Pat, make explicit this failure of her personality.

> 'I want love,' she was saying with passion. 'Someone who says, how pretty you look, Mrs. McCleary: how young; how beautifully you do things ... You do see, don't you - ? Loved and cared for and wanted. That's how I want to feel, all the time.' (SFC, p.133).

What the narrative situation has done is make very clear to us

that Pat has certain personality deficiencies. We have come to know her quite well by the end of the story, whereas Rebecca remains a distant figure. Our knowledge of Rebecca is second-hand, and she never really intrudes in the way that Pat does. The uneven treatment of Pat and Rebecca requires us to be alert to aspects of the relationship around which the story is formed. Pat's behaviour towards Rebecca is the result of her incomplete knowledge of her (and of her disinclination to learn), and that incomplete knowledge is indicated or prefigured for the reader in the restricted access to Rebecca's consciousness so that we too have an incomplete knowledge of her. As is the case in other stories of the race barrier, the failure to communicate comes across more from the failure of the whites to bridge the gap than from any indicated deficiency of the blacks. The fullness of Pat's failure is revealed, but Rebecca is left 'unexposed', so any failure on her part is not relevant to the story's intention.

Both of the stories that deal with childhood are told in the first person, from a point in time much later than the narrated events. Both present a situation in which a significant revelation occurs that both reveals and affects the characters considerably.

"Clowns in Clover" is the story of a young girl and her uncle, an asylum patient. He visits his sister (the girl's mother) and her family once a year, and only really ever puts himself forward when the family sing at the piano. Otherwise he avoids contact, and remains quiet, gentle and withdrawing. When the young girl learns that her uncle is an asylum patient, she is

shocked, and comes to fear and hate him, as well as to fear that she might inherit some of his 'madness'. Thereafter she avoids coming into contact with him, even to the extent of organising to go away when he visits. The last time she sees him is the result of a miscalculation. She does not stay to say hallo, even, but brushes past her arriving uncle in her haste to get away. As an older woman, however, she feels that she re-establishes contact with herself, as well as with him, through discovering his favourite song ('Clowns in Clover') and finding that her reaction to it was a warm one.

The story does not fit into any of the previously established patterns. There are three elements to be considered; two moment of high intensity and high focus - first, Barbara's discovering that Uncle Chookie is an asylum patient, and secondly, the silent confrontation between herself and her uncle - and the last element is the narrator's summing up of the experience, which occurs fifteen years after she had last seen her uncle. Once again the role of the narrator is given special status within the story in that it is her conclusion which gives the story its final moment of insight, instead of the insight coming from a characteristic action. The story is given the singleness of effect in the narrative situation. Told by the narrator, Barbara, fifteen years after her childhood, the whole story is tinged by the sense of past time. However, this is only the result of the secure establishment of the time framework, as the narration of the incidents themselves tries to present the impression of contemporaneity. The reason for this is that Barbara has to be able to talk of Uncle Chookie at the start as

if she did not know that he was an asylum patient, so that when the knowledge is revealed to Barbara by Katie, the reader will be as surprised as Barbara appears to be.

"My First Two Women" also has a first person narrator looking back on his childhood. "If I search my adult experience as a man ..." (SFC, p.106), tells us that the narrating self is far distant in time from the experiencing self. Yet the narrating self attempts more to disappear from the narration than in "Clowns in Clover", with the result that we feel the narrating self has at times attempted to recreate the immediacy of his boyhood experiences. "I was nearly five years old, and due to begin going to school," (SFC, p.104). The narrating self is trying to present an illusion that the narrating present is the same as the experiencing present. This can not be sustained. At times, the conclusions drawn from the action are not those that the experiencing self could have articulated. "I looked up into the stare of those eyes, grown-up eyes that fell before mine, and in me, like milk soured by a flash of lightning, the sweet secretion of affection became insipid in the fearful amazed thrill of victim turned victor." (SFC, p.104). The story's basic structure is similar to those of "Clowns in Clover". It has two moments of insight, presented in high focus, followed by the narrator, in the narrating present, presenting the final key revelation. The first moment of insight occurs when he tells Debs for the first time that he will call her 'Mummy', which concludes the first phase of his adapting to the change from father and mother to father and stepmother. The second occurs

years later, when he learns that his mother had given him up in the divorce settlement. Deb's reaction to this, and her understanding of their relationship: "We're really good friends, aren't we?" (SFC, p.114), provokes the last bitter conclusion - which is his resentment against her because he feels he has lost something - that his relationship with her was never more than just friendship.

These two stories do not break any new ground as far as treatment of the theme goes. There are moments of pain in growing up, moments when knowledge that is unavoidable has to be met, and out of which comes uncertainty. In these two stories, the moments occur, just as they did in the previous stories on this theme. Where these two do present an advance is the role that the narrator plays in controlling the exposure of knowledge to the reader. The narrator in "My First Two Women" achieves a better degree of what Cohn calls consonant self narration[7] (even though it is frequently interrupted) than occurs in "Clowns in Clover". The resulting effect is that for the former story, the reader approaches the consciousness of the young boy more immediately, with less interference than in the latter story. Consequently, the character of the young boy is better realised, and the narrating voice's comment at the end is better integrated with the character as we have come to perceive it.

[7] Dorrit Cohn explains consonant self-narration in these terms: "One of the easiest and most sustained examples of consonant self-narration is Kurt Hamsun's Hunger (1890). Not once in this entire novel does its narrator draw attention to his present, narrating self by adding information, opinions or judgements that were not his during past experience." (Cohn, p.155).

There are four stories that deal with the theme of self-deception. "Enemies" and "Face from Atlantis" deal with the self-deception that may arise in growing old and adjusting to the changes of that circumstance, while "Out of Season" and "The Cicatrice" are about the deceptions that jealous or unhappy women practise on themselves and on others.

"Enemies" is about Mrs Clara Hansen, the only person in Gordimer's stories who appears in two separate stories. She is an elderly widow, and the "enemies" of the title are those aspects of herself which attempt to challenge her self-possession, attempt to provoke her into relaxing the rigid self-control and incommunication with the outside world to which her personality deficiencies have led her. The story's structure is simple - that of the sustained single revelation, in this case, of the character of Mrs Hansen. There is an appropriate symbolism of withdrawal - Mrs Hansen withdraws into her train compartment for the duration of the story (except for dinner), where she will be alone and undisturbed.[8] A contrast is implied between Mrs Hansen (of the rigid control) and the old fat lady next door, who over-indulges herself at dinner, and then, although possibly not as a direct consequence, dies during the night. The old fat lady is presented as an alternative, an example of the Mrs Hansen that might have existed if the 'old fool' self had had its way. The self-deception involved is in Mrs Hansen's belief that she can control her 'old fool' self and

[8] Millar, p. 45

be a better person for it. She can and does control herself but she loses some valuable part of her humanity in the process. The ending is unclear (except for the obvious intention) and so the story does not seem to present any significant revelation. Instead we see only the dualistic character of Mrs Hansen, within whom is the struggle between self-control and relaxation.

"Face from Atlantis" is the only story in the collection that is not set in South Africa, and in which most of the characters are not South African. In fact, apart from Eileen, the wife of a German refugee turned businessman, the story has very little South African connection. However, the theme is universal, and the story's situation is well suited to the intention - which is to expose the delusions that people hold about others, and themselves. The group of Germans whom Waldeck meets on his travels had grown up together in pre-Hitler Germany, sharing attitudes and experiences in a special way. Now, some twenty years later, they rediscover themselves, and find one another changed, but unchanged. They are changed in that they have grown older, richer and have discarded aspects of their youth in order to accommodate their new countries. They remain unchanged in that they see themselves still in relation to one another as they had been in Germany. And this is all epitomised in one person, Carlitta Hicks. Carlitta had been someone very special. "Neither she nor we believed any one of us was good enough for her", says Stefan (SFC, p.66). The relevant point is not whether or not she was in fact too good for them, but only that they believed it. And that is part of their delusion. Carlitta was attractive, but no evidence is produced to show any real quali-

ties that did in fact make her better than the rest of them. Her behaviour towards Klaus, and her hysteria on the ski-slope, suggest that she should have been much the same as anyone else. Or, possibly, worse. People could have been avoiding her because they recognised this instinctively, yet because of her charm, were unwilling to articulate their genuine response to her.

The story line is simple. Waldeck and his wife travel from South Africa to meet his old friends in Europe and America. In New York he finally meets up with Carlitta, whom nobody else had kept in touch with. Waldeck and Eileen, Stefan and his wife have a meal with Carlitta and her American husband, Edgar Hicks. After the lunch, Waldeck and Stefan discuss her and find her unchanged. Eileen is so distressed by their inability to see how she is changed that she starts telling them. Then she suddenly realises that indeed for them, and in their perception of Carlitta, she has not changed.

The story's structure follows a recognisable pattern. The central figure, or at least the figure who most often has her point of view presented, is Eileen Brand. (She is in one sense, an observer to the interactions of the Germans, and so well suited to present the apparent deceptions and illusions, without the need for realisation of these illusions by the characters themselves holding them.) There is a long introduction - to Waldeck, Eileen, his past, and then his friends Siggie and Stefan. The moment of high focus is the meal shared by the Brand, Raines and Hicks couples. After this comes the reflection on it, again presented by the author through the consciousness of

Eileen Brand. But the story does not end there. Stefan announces that he purposefully avoided Carlitta in Philadelphia, and Waldeck laughs in sympathy, in understanding. This complicity between them requires us to re-examine our understanding of the regard in which they had held Carlitta.

Understanding Carlitta is the key to this story. Eileen is given a chance to get to know Carlitta through her husband's pictures and accounts of her. She does not develop the same need to maintain the illusion about Carlitta that the others seem to have built up. It almost seems as if they needed to build the illusion in order to justify the place of importance they wanted to give to Carlitta. Then, meeting her again, they fall into the same delusion, because they want to maintain the memory. They do not want to have to go on meeting her (perhaps that had been part of the earlier pattern too) but she was still charming, still the centre of the group. Eileen sees through this delusion about Carlitta being unchanged. She wants to get them at least to acknowledge that - but at the moment when she wants to start, she suddenly realises a truth about her husband and Stefan - which is, that in the things which had formed the basis of the delusion - the arrogance, the disdainful confidence, Carlitta had indeed not changed, as her story about her dinner guests having to pitch hay reveals. What makes the ending significant is that the delusion is reinforced and even Eileen, who could have been the agent to explode the delusion, is silenced.

The story succeeds because of the characterisation, especially of Carlitta. Much attention is paid to details of her personal appearance, with Gordimer's customary perception of

minutiae playing a major role in presenting this. "And the face. Well, there is a stage in a woman's life when her face gets too thin or too fat." (SFC, p.68), or "the eyes had lost nothing, they shone on greedy and tremendous, just as they had always been ..." (SFC, p.68). "Her teeth were small, square and still good. On her neglected face the lipstick was obviously a last minute adornment." (SFC, p.68). Not only is there attention to detail, but the detail is characterising, and mingled with it, are directly characterising attributes as well. In addition to this, stories are told to reveal her behaviour, and the attitude of people towards her in her youth. She was arrogant; she did not consider other people's needs or wishes. When they meet in middle age, she insists on, and they play, the same game as before. Carlitta puts herself at the centre of things, and expects others to follow. Her own reaction to the hay-making story (observed by Eileen) reveals a depth of passion the reader had not seen before. The passion is half arrogant and malicious, and half tinged with regret at what she had come down to. Nobody but Eileen picks up that she spent four years in Greenwich Village, years which must in some way have broken her sufficiently that she marries Edgar Hicks - it seems - in despair.

"The Cicatrice" is an extreme example of what unity in a short story can be. It almost happens in real time (that is, the time it takes to tell the story has the same duration as the incidents themselves) and in the same space. The story line itself is simple. Jo, having recently remarried, after his divorce from Hannah, is walking in a street with his new wife,

accompanied by a mutual friend, Marcus Bianci. They talk for about ten minutes, mostly about Hanna's trip, and then part, each party walking on. Afterwards, assessment of the meeting takes place. Behind all this though, the story actually takes place in the consciousnesses of Hannah and Jo.

The structure then is that of the single sustained revelation. The revelation is staggered; part of it being revealed through the consciousness of Hannah and Jo, and the other part by direct narration. The theme is that of self-delusion of a man and a woman caused by jealousy. The deception that takes place in Hannah is between the appearance she presents to the outside world, and the pain she feels in her inner self. She does not outwardly acknowledge the pain, and in this she attempts to delude others. This is pre-figured at the start of the story. It is the new wife who sees Hannah first, and when Hannah sees her ex-husband with his new wife, her immediate reaction is "Oh, God ..." (SFC, p.136). However, the outward appearance and the inner reality do not conform.

> And it was just as well, for at once she was clinging to Marcus the way a child will almost strangle its mother in embarrassment or fear, inhibiting its own escape by making it impossible for the woman to bear it away to safety. The new wife saw her striding along very close and absorbed with her companion, laughing up into his smile... (SFC, p.136,7)

The crisis comes when Hannah, having been introduced to Gypsey, the new wife, has to greet her in normal everyday courtesy. She does this but:

> ... no one, not the new wife, not Jo, not Bianci

> even, though he was in contact with her body through her arm, knew of the horrible spasm of terror and despair that contracted inside her for one unbearable moment. Her head was thrust down brutally into darkness; the eternal smothering darkness of what has been lost. And her jealousy ... . (SFC, p.139)

However, she does maintain appearances, and is able to cope with the internal turmoil. When the foursome parts, she asks Bianci for assurance that she had not given anything away. She asks in "the voice of a child seeking the approval of a father: ... 'Was I all right?'" On being reassured, she hears "at last and again, the bells of another triumph." (SFC, p.143). The triumph relates to the way she had maintained the deception as to the true state of her inner self.

Against this is presented the process of disillusionment that Jo undergoes as a result. This too is in part pre-figured, by Hannah's understanding of her own and the new wife's personalities. She is scathing to Bianci about the new wife. "Like a puppy on a string. Stop when the master stops. Wait to be allowed to go on." (SFC, p.142). Yet she knows that she is the more powerful, the more attractive woman, but feels that Jo has been attracted to Gypsey so as to be "able to be protective towards her." (SFC, p.143). In fact, Jo does realise that his new wife has neither the charm nor the power of his first wife. She has the 'dog virtues', and Hannah revealed that to him. It was Hannah's 'being' that had first made him love her, and then it was her behaviour that had caused him to divorce her ("playing some perverse game of rejection with Jo until she had goaded him into divorcing her" (SFC, p.140,1)) and so he had had to take refuge in the new wife. Hannah then makes him realise her quali-

ties, and that this is what his life had been led to - and so he turns to hate the person responsible - Hannah.

The last story in the group is entitled "Out of Season". Using the first person narrative situation, Gordimer again distinguishes the commentary on events and character, which is in the present tense, from the incident, which is told in the past tense as was the case with "Six Feet of the Country". The story itself is slight, and the final revelation seems a small one in terms of the action of the story. But again, it is a story in which the study of character reveals the theme of deception and its revelation. Most of the story is taken up with the histories of the four women who are having lunch together. Each history is narrated by Lottie, but the most important person in the story is Caroline Dahlberg. She has distinguished herself by marrying for a second time - to a man much younger than herself. Just before the four of them go in to lunch, the post arrives, and Caroline reads out from a letter from her husband (absent on a business trip) a snatch of the ending of the letter. The reading concludes:

> '...We'll come up again together in September. I miss you terribly and I want you in my arms ...' Caroline broke off, giving a little guilty dismissing shrug, a giggle as if she had let out a hiccup instead of an indiscretion ... Caroline took her underlip smilingly in her teeth, in apology but not in embarrassment. (SFC, p.196)

During the meal, Lottie going back to the lounge discovers that Caroline had embroidered the ending to give it a passion that was not there. The letter in fact ended with the words "in September." This is done to deceive her guests into thinking that the

second marriage is something other than it really is. As an ending, and in comparison with the emblematic actions that conclude other stories, this revelation is slight, and only relates to a small aspect within the story. However, it is as a reflection of her character generally that it assumes importance.

Lottie is presented as both narrator and commentator. Her comments are detailed and 'objective' - they spare nothing in the descriptions, even of herself. It is in her description of Caroline that the thematic aspect is introduced.

> Caroline wore, as usual, one of those low-necked dresses that showed off her neck - lovely still though the clear flesh had thickened and softened and trembled very slightly when she swallowed - and the first swell of her breasts, still small and dazzlingly white as clear sand, though the angle at which they remained curved was the immobile one of artifice. (SFC, p.191).

Twice it occurs - a complimentary observation is made (the appearance) and then a qualifying clause disillusions the reader (the reality). The result is that we expect the ending to be as it is - Lottie will be the agent of exposure, and Caroline will have something she is trying to achieve by deception, revealed. The characterisation, in other words, enhances the theme.

There is a slight change in the treatment of this theme from the previous stories. Generally speaking, the illusions in these stories are not broken, as was the case in the earlier stories. The readers are informed of the deceptions - but through a narrator, or the narrative situation, or by peripheral characters. The person or persons deceiving themselves generally are sustained in their illusions at the end of the story. Mrs Hansen and Caroline Dahlberg remain fixed in their self-deception, and the characters in "Face from Atlantis" and "The Cicatrice" (with

the exception of Jo) have their deceptions re-inforced.

The next group of stories to be considered could be a sub-group of the theme of self-deception and illusion, but they have been linked together by a non-thematic connection; they are stories in which Gordimer manipulates the sympathy of the reader, as if the story were constructed to achieve that end. The stories are "A Wand'ring Minstrel, I" and "A Touch of Young Life".

"A Wand'ring Minstrel, I" is the story of an afternoon spent in the Grant household. The Grants and the Sunday guests are awaiting the arrival of Andrew and Sheila Douglas and their children, who are to be houseguests for a while. The discussion about the Douglases creates a pool of sympathy for Sheila, because of the disparaging comments and hints about Andrew Douglas. When they do finally arrive, Andrew Douglas turns out to be a thoroughly genial and entertaining person, who through his charm, quickly endears himself to the children present, and then to the parents as well. During this process, we see Sheila Douglas sitting withdrawn and disapproving, until the ending of the story reveals that she has silently slipped out of the room and its company. We feel alienated from her for this behaviour - in other words, our sympathies are switched and reversed - our approval goes from Sheila to Andrew, and our disapproval from Andrew to Sheila, mainly through the exercise of charm on Andrew's part. The ironic thing is that when we consider it again, our sympathy switches back, because Andrew does show that the reports on him (which at first earned him our disapproval)

are in fact justified. But it is complicated. We know by report that we should disapprove of Andrew, yet he is attractive in presentation. We know by report that we should sympathise with Sheila, yet in the presentation of her, there is little to commend her.

It starts with the Douglas's being expected at the Grant's. They do not have their own home because Andrew is described as "utterly irresponsible, utterly unreliable", "three jobs in five months" (SFC, p.48), and stories are repeated of his not coming home for two full days after a drinking party. Sheila is the "poor thing" who has to put up with all this. Andrew is later described as a "drunkard", who "drinks like a fish" (SFC, p.51), so the Grants have hidden their drink away.

When the Douglases arrive, the switch in sympathy begins. Sheila is described in austere terms that prevent our coming too close to her.

> The tall smooth-browed English girl, whose eyes looked as if they had never focussed on anything smaller or warmer than open spaces, whose stiff, little-girl neck rose very straight from her neat blouse ... (SFC, p.52)

Later, when drinks are offered, she breaks her silence by saying stiffly, "I wish you wouldn't" (SFC, p.54), when Andrew accepts a drink. The comments that follow turn us away from Sheila. "The remark fell with the prim clarity of a stone in a puddle. Everyone in the room was instantly remote with embarrassment, except Andrew Douglas ..." (SFC, p.55). The guests, still sympathetic, respond with embarrassment because of her disapproval, yet in a way the guests disapprove that she voices that disapproval so nakedly. Sheila Douglas then starts becoming isolated from her

hosts and their guests. When Andrew tries to communicate with her, by winking a smile at her, she does not respond. She has obviously experienced his charm before, and for her, it has ceased to charm. Later, after he has sung a song for the children, she makes another comment, "Do you think that's a song for children?" (SFC, p.57). However, this time, because the guests' sympathies are not with her any longer, the reaction is muted. "A flicker of interest passed to her, but eyes were on the entertainer: there was even, perhaps, a slight irritation at the interruption." (SFC, p.57,58). What makes this manipulation so effective is that Gordimer does not simply reverse black to white, and white to black. We have lost sympathy for the girl, but yet we have to acknowledge that there was nothing wrong with her reactions in the light of what she had been through. We should not lose sympathy for her, but we do.

Similarly, in the presentation of Andrew Douglas, the charm is shown in order that our sympathies might shift, but signals are left to make it quite clear that the earlier reports are in fact valid, and we should not sympathise. As he enters the room for the first time, he seemed to sway. "Did he need holding? Or did they imagine that he swayed slightly, or rather the way he held himself showed that somewhere inside him, something swayed?" (SFC, p.53). He is described as "one of those handsome fair men whose features, eyes and marking of hairline and brows have become smudged and neutral-toned in the dissolvent of liquor and fleshiness." (SFC, p.53). Yet it is he who puts them at their ease, he who is relaxed, and we start warming to his charm, his

ease with other people, and the delight of the children in him. Soon the adults are also enjoying his singing and clowning, and yet "his underlip gleamed with the saliva of song, his eyes swam a little with the second brandy which Rupert had given him." (SFC, p.58).

It is this complexity which makes the story work successfully - a sensitive reading will of necessity leave us with ambivalent feelings towards both partners - which is maybe what we should feel, anyway.

The other story in which a switch of sympathy is required is "A Bit of Young Life". In one sense, this is a story in which an illusion is shattered, for all parties concerned - those being deceived and the party reponsible for the deception. The story is simple enough. A young married woman with her child becomes the favourite among the other guests and hangers-on at a beach-front hotel. She is reticent about her situation but very friendly and warm-hearted in company. She is taken up by both young and old: by the young for her beauty, and by the old because her husband is a member of a good respectable family, the Maisels. When she has to leave suddenly, everyone is dismayed at the loss of her company. Yet a few days later, the newspapers confirm an ugly rumour about her - that she was involved in a nasty divorce action, involving infidelity on her part, and a whole network of deceit and lies. The ending however forces us to transcend the switch in sympathy which this revelation is intended to produce. The reader, having been favourably disposed towards the wife during the story, will follow the change in attitude of the hotel world, but then the ending, which shows her awareness of what she

was doing and had done, somehow restores to the reader a sense of her 'worth'. She feels:

> a burden of duplicity heavier than she had felt for all the lies, the faithlessness, the cunning of her passion. A tear that seemed to have the little tickling feet of a centipede ran down the side of her nose. Now no one had been spared: no one at all. (SFC, p.186).

The last story in the collection does not really conform with the others so far dealt with. There is a looseness about the structure of the story with the result that the story's meaning, intention and theme are not clear. It deals in two unequal parts with the two men who live "charmed lives". The common feature is Kate Shand, whose reaction against them at the end of the story is intended to link the two sections together. Kate's mother has time for both men, Simon Datnow the deaf watchmaker, and Dr. Connor the drunkard G.P. Kate as a child, following her mother, respects both, but when she qualifies as a teacher, she refuses to consider teaching in her home town because she felt that "she must turn away, to live." (SFC, p.159). The two sections are not of equal weight. That of Dr. Connor seems to be nothing more than a history, but Simon Datnow's description gathers together into a powerfully symbolic gesture of frustration and anger by the deaf watchmaker.

However, the story is significant in that it is the only story in the book that does not have any dialogue at all. One or two characteristic sayings, and one or two sentences are quoted, but the presentation is always reportlike. The effect of this again is the increased attention that one needs to give to the narrator and the narrative situation. One is tempted to conclude

that Gordimer included it in the collection in order to show the range and scope of her stories and the technical abilities used in them.

CHAPTER FOUR

FRIDAY'S FOOTPRINT

Friday's Footprint was published in 1960 and it contains stories mainly from overseas magazines since 1956. It seems true, as Margerey claims that once Gordimer had established her 'voice' in her first collection of stories, the development in the next two volumes, while evident, is slight. He goes on to describe the collection as: "spare, but full and mature", "perhaps her finest collection to date."[1]

The reviews that greeted the collection on its publication were generally complimentary, but not very helpful for pinpointing those excellences which won the book the 1961 W.H. Smith Prize. The Times Literary Supplement review saw a structural feature of the stories being "the sudden appalling discovery that dissolves innocence."[2] The New Statesman was equally non-specific: "'Nobody knows what the other is thinking' might be the motto for Friday's Footprint."[3] Perhaps the most helpful review comes from David Hendrick in The Purple Renoster.

1 Kevin Magarey, "Cutting the Jewel: Facets of Art in Nadine Gordimer's Short Stories," Southern Review (Adelaide), 7 (1974), pp.17,18.

2 Rev. of Friday's Footprint by Nadine Gordimer, Times Literary Supplement, 12 February 1960, p.93.

3 Naomi Lewis, "Short Stories," Rev. of Friday's Footprint, by Nadine Gordimer, The New Statesman, 20 February 1960, p.263.

The stories contain "moments of life when experience and emotion uncover ... a new understanding or illumination of self."[4] None of these comments says anything specific about Friday's Footprint - they could easily, and in fact do refer more to Gordimer's general style as revealed by all three of her first collections of short stories. A more extended article by Anthony Woodward, published in 1961, makes much more significant comment: "The disconcerting thing about Nadine Gordimer is that she has many of the hall-marks of the potentially first-rate."[5] He characterises her technique as follows:

> She takes a small incident ... and by a swift impressionistic technique strongly reminiscent of Katherine Mansfield builds up the revealing pattern of relationships between the symbolic incident and the human characters involved. The space of time covered is short, sometimes contiguous with the facts related, and such a method naturally calls for great condensation by the writer; each piece of description, each detail has to be loaded with suggestion and significance. (Woodward, p.3)

However, while that description is accurate, he goes on to criticise her strongly because, he claims, the virtuoso quality of her description often prevents the reader from realising that there is nothing of substance underneath. He also criticises her for using what he called the 'coup de théâtre' - relying not on a genuine revelation of any realised relationship, but the surface excitability of the writing. "Feeling is in excess of

4 David Hendricks, Rev. of Friday's Footprint by Nadine Gordimer, The Purple Renoster, Summer 1960, p.85.

5 Anthony Woodward, "Nadine Gordimer," Theoria, 16 (1961), p.2.

situation." He goes on immediately to say: "It is a habit that is growing on her; her latest collection, Friday's Footprint, is full of that kind of falso virtuoso dramatics." (Woodward, p.6). Part of the intention of this chapter is to test these claims, and to decide on the validity of Woodward's comments.

There is certainly a moving away, in emphasis, from the approach to the themes developed in the previous collections. There also seems to be a greater tendency towards developing a number of themes in a single story, with one of them perhaps, predominating. There are two stories whose central concern is race, and in the treatment of this theme, there do not appear to be significant differences from her previous approach. One story deals with old age, and two with childhood experiences - and the remaining stories deal with an area that was only briefly touched on by Gordimer in her first collection and not at all in the second. There are five stories that explore the situations of married people - the insights into the characters of the people involved, or else into the nature of the relationships themselves. And lastly, two stories deal with a familiar Gordimer preoccupation - the façades that people erect around themselves. The advances that the stories of this collection reveal are more a matter of refinement, than of change of basic approach. Further, it seems that more attention is being paid in this collection to exploring the limits of the short story structure than to exploring in greater depth the themes and their implications.

In the early stories, it had been the case that the stories were structured around a single incident, leading to the revelation of a single insight. This remains true for a number of

stories in this collection, but some others reveal an important development in that they now depend on the interaction of incidents or insights, out of which is thrown up, at a higher level of abstraction than before, the single revelation that constitutes the story, and thus produces the effect of unity within the story. The stories themselves become fuller slices of life, with more variety of incident, much more closely packed together. The structures analysed from the first stories are no longer fully applicable - but some features are, however, retained. There is still normally a revelation tied into the ending. There are still moments of high focus when insight is achieved. But the central revelation is now the result of the interaction of multiple insights, and the ending becomes just one in a number of equally important understandings. This shift in emphasis is certainly alluded to in Woodward's article. It is true that no longer is the major weight of the story proportionately attached to the ending. So if the reader looks only to the ending for explanation of the story, he will be disappointed and that could explain the feeling that Woodward's criticism deals with.

A further literary development is her control over the matter of tone. Becoming more apparent in this collection is Gordimer's tendency to make the tone of the stories neutral. There seems to be no indication of favour or disfavour - either towards characters involved, or in judgement of the situation itself. The narrator is dispassionate, without bias except in the inclusion or exclusion of details, and in emphasis. We sometimes do not know how to react to the stories because we get

no lead from the tone. Linked with this is an increasing use of irony, both as a structural feature and as a predominant tone in a number of stories. Gordimer is quoted as saying:

> Proust said (I paraphrase) style is born of the meeting between the writer and his situation. In a society like that of South Africa, where a decent legal life is impossible, a society whose very essence is false values and mutual disgust, irony lends itself to you, when you analyse what happens. [6]

However, the advance is not general. Some of the stories are very similar in mode and approach to those of Six Feet of the Country. The stories that deal with race do not reveal significant developments in the treatment of race. "The Bridegroom" concerns the white supervisor of a roadgang camp far away from any society. The isolation is enhanced by the solitariness of the white man, which contrasts markedly with the noisy social activity of the black workers in their separate camp a short distance away. The supervisor is looked after by a black man called Piet, and there exists a clear understanding and communication between master and servant, despite language difficulties and cultural separation. This communication is possible largely because routine has replaced living - the activities of the day occur within a very restricted and predetermined context. The evening described in the story is a celebration - the last evening spent in the camp by the supervisor before his marriage. He is to leave to go to Francistown the next day. The storyline is fairly simple. After work, the supervisor returns to his

[6] Johannes Riis, "Nadine Gordimer," Kunapipi, 2, No.1 (1981), p.21.

camp, washes himself, smokes his pipe as the evening sets, has his food brought to him, including the special treat of koek-susters. After eating, the labourers, at first tentatively, join him at his fire, and play the musical instruments they had made, for him. He is tempted out of his solitariness to offer to bring back with him a radio, so that they could listen to 'real' music. This offer, once made, causes him great embarrassment, and when another thought arises in him, to offer them some brandy, he quashes it immediately. The real but unacknowledged shared companionship of the situation described is contrasted with the externally imposed social restraints. This is perhaps the most significant feature. The story is not of a simple racial 'barrier' - but of the internalised constraints that pervert natural social interaction occurring. Gordimer is examining a special kind of consciousness. The white supervisor cannot communicate with the workers except through his interpreter, and, in a different way, (which is the crux of the story), through music. His consciousness is frequently revealed through narrated monologue, and it is seen to be a limited consciousness - words such as "did not understand" keep cropping up ("He did not understand ...",[7] "He was not used to visualising situations ..." (FF, p.85), "His thoughts shuttled ... in a slow and painstaking way" (FF, p.86), "he was not aware of it ..." (FF, p.88)). But balanced against these are the instances when communication does

[7] Nadine Gordimer, Friday's Footprint (London: Gollancz, 1960), p.83. (All succeeding page references will be included in the text.)

seem to work - between the supervisor and Piet, between all of them through the music, the supervisor's getting married.

The story's structure is simple and follows the pattern established in the earlier stories. It is a single ongoing exposition, which rises to a point of high focus during the music, and his reactions to what happens then. The willingness to share human feelings is overcome by his internalised constraints.

> The lyre player picked up his flimsy piece of wood again, and slowly what the young man was feeling inside himself seemed to find a voice: up into the night beyond the fire it went, uncoiling from his breast and bringing ease. (FF, p.90)

This contrasts with:

> He thought for a moment that he would give them the rest of the bottle of brandy, Hell, no, man, it was mad. If they got a taste for the stuff, they'd be pinching it all the time ... (FF, p.90)

Where then lies the key to this story's success? Partly in its simplicity - of theme and of structure, i.e. it is readily accessible, mostly however, because of the control exerted over the material of the story. It is not the harsh satirical tone that Gordimer unleashes on liberalism's hypocrisies when they occur - instead there seems almost to be a sympathy with the relationships within the situation. However, there is no suggestion that these are the desired relationships. The control is also evident in the characterisation of the white man. His limitations are clearly drawn, yet because he does not hold any pretensions, these limitations are not viewed harshly. And, finally, the control is revealed by the sustained pattern of

revelations that keep the story evenly balanced. The high focus on the account of the music has an important part to play within the story, but the story does not depend on it alone for the expression of its meaning.

The other story on a racial theme, "Something for the Time Being" is a more complicated matter. Firstly, the racial theme is there, but it is accompanied by a comment on marriage as well. Although the story seems to centre on Daniel Mngoma's attempt to find and hold a job after his release from jail, it also deals with the nature of the relationships between Mngoma and his wife, and between his prospective employer, William Chadders, and his wife, Madge; and the effects of employing and sacking Mngoma on each of the marriages. In a way, this complexity is more satisfactory than a single theme, because of the interwoven patterns of life itself. It might, on the other hand, detract from the notions of unity and 'the single effect' that characterise the modern short story.

The story is about Daniel Mngoma, a black political organiser, just released from prison, and looking for a job. William Chadders, a liberal-minded businessman gives him a job on the urging of his wife, Madge, but he finds that he has to sack him because Mngoma insists on wearing his congress button - in this way refusing to compromise himself. Chadder's inconsistency, between good intentions and unsympathetic actions which is revealed here, amounts almost to betrayal, because the reason for his refusal to allow Mngoma to wear the congress button is such a concession to the apartheid mentality as to reveal Chadder s' essential moral bankruptcy.

> 'The factory depends on a stable, satisfied black labour force ... you and I know that the whole black wage standard isn't enough ... that they haven't a legal union ... but ... I can't officially admit an element that represents dissatisfaction with their lot.' (FF, p.233)

In inverted counterpoint to this is the reaction of the wives to the incident. The counterpoint is developed in that Madge Chadders is uncompromising, while her husband has compromised himself to the hilt, and Ella Mngoma tries to persuade Daniel to compromise himself in the wearing of his congress button. The story starts and ends with the Mngoma couple, and the Chadders couple occupy the middle. Gordimer does not allow any situation to be simplistic, i.e. the presentation of William Chadders is initially positive.

> William did not carry a banner in the streets, of course: he worked up there, among his first principles and historical precedents and economic necessities, but now they were translated from theory to practice of an anonymous, large-scale and behind-the-scenes sort - he was the brains and some of the money in a scheme to get Africans some economic power besides consumer power, through the setting up of an all-African trust company and investment corporation. (FF, p.229)

The reader has to absorb both these paradoxical aspects of the man. Madge is strikingly different. Her reactions are simple, immediate, personal and common-sensical. When William explains what happened during the day, Madge is irritated by her husband's inconsistency. She accuses him: "You'll let him have anything except the one thing worth having" (FF, p.234), which is his self-respect. Ella Mngoma knew that the man she married was a political figure, yet she betrays that part of herself by

suggesting that he should have taken off his congress button.

In each case, the crisis that is presented at the end is not a decisive one. Madge Chadder s'anger is controlled by her determination to "Let things flow, cover up, go on," (FF, p.234), and Ella Mngoma's evident distress calls forth a sympathetic response from Daniel. Where the story is significant is that it seems to be a fairly strong attack on liberal attitudes that compromise themselves by inadequate action. In fact, there does not seem to be any course of action that liberalism, as an ideology, develops. Consequently, in a situation which calls for action, liberalism, almost by definition, will frustrate itself and become inconsistent. This inconsistency is the target of Gordimer's attack, as it has been in some of the earlier race stories, e.g. "Six Feet of the Country."

The two stories that deal with those childhood experiences which reveal to children the nature of things in the adult world, are different from the preceding stories in earlier volumes on this theme, only in as much as the central characters seem to be more willing to absorb the knowledge that experience forces on people. But in essence the stories are similar - they follow the same approach to the theme, and the moments of high focus are still there, although not as central a component in the revelation of the story as in the earliest stories.

"Little Willie" is a story that deals with class differences. Denise, the eight-year old daughter of the Town Clerk, is the object of adoration of Little Willie, one of the poor whites living in Railway Avenue. Much is made of the

distance between the poor white railway workers' social situation, and that of the Town Clerk. Denise reacts with horrified interest to Uncle Basil's account of Little Willie's adoration, and wants none of it. Denise and Little Willie do not actually meet - Uncle Basil reports to Denise on Willie's activities - to her chagrin. This becomes a chance for her family to tease her. When her mother also seems to Denise to be joining in the teasing of her, this "produced a hardening in Denise that became her armour against, and finally defeated Little Willie." (FF, p.64,65). The moment of high focus comes when the Town Clerk's family go on holiday, and as they leave, by train, the clerk from Uncle Basil's office arrives with a gift for Denise from Willie. It is an absurdly expensive box of chocolates, and this produces an ambivalent response in Denise. She still regards him as below her - 'a dirty boy', yet the gift is fine and she appreciates that. The conclusion reveals completely the emphasis that Gordimer was intending, and the reference to the fruit of knowledge, with its overtones of the Creation story, is a clear indication of the nature of the knowledge that Denise has gained.

> Earned by scorn and disdain, it was like nothing she had ever been given before: she held the box recklessly tight, and when she peeled the gold paper off the first chocolate and put it into her mouth, the cherry inside was the fruit of knowledge on her tongue. (FF, p.67)

What makes this story so much more than just a simple version of the theme is the moment when the reader realises the ending operates on two very separate levels. The picture of Little Willie is carefully cultivated - that he is one of the urchins who 'spoil' weddings at the Town Hall by hanging around

the doors, or who sell newspapers and always look cold. This is what we are expected to believe. But those descriptions are always made in a general way, not particularly related directly to Little Willie. The only time he is specifically identified is as one of the boys who watched the Regatta at the landing stage (FF, p.61). However, the ending contains a surprise. Uncle Basil had told Denise that Willie would be at the station to see them leave - to Denise's horror. She looks out for him, but doesn't see him. When the office boy arrives, from Uncle Basil's office, she does not realise that this is Little Willie. She was expecting Willie to be something else. As a result, the whole story is suddenly seen from a different perspective, and the ending takes on a surge of irony because neither the reader nor Denise immediately identifies the messenger as Willie - they do not relate Uncle Basil's comment about Willie's being at the station with the office boy who does arrive. Denise's expectations of Willie are stereotyped - she can not see the reality (just as the reader might pass over the importance of the mention of the messenger). This stereotyping by Denise is set up by the analysis of class prejudice that the story reveals. This is the first time in one of her stories that Gordimer presents class differences as a central feature of a story.[8] She does not attempt to enter the consciousness of the child in the poor white situation at all, because she is concerned with the analysis of

[8] It was first published in The New Yorker, March 1957.

the snobbishness with which poverty is viewed by people in comfortable middle class surroundings. "Because she had never been poor, and had never known anyone who was really poor, Denise was deeply imaginatively aware of the shame and disgrace of poverty." (FF, p.59,60). The ironic identification of the narrator with the attitudes of the people being described adds to the texture of that comment.

The other story that deals with this theme of childhood is "Harry's Presence". Told in the first person, it differs from earlier stories in that the narrator is peripheral to the main action of the story, even though the conclusion is about her realisation of her parents' relationship. The pattern of the story is regular - a longish introduction to the family and its history, and then to Harry; a series of incidents which reveal the nature of the enlarged family's interaction, ending with a crisis encounter in high focus. After this, the interaction is interpreted by a comment from the narrator. The family is presented in detail. The father is Greek, but because he married a non-Greek, who is not prepared to adopt Greek habits, the father becomes a dispossessed person. He does not develop friends outside of the Greek community, which he now shuns. As a result, he becomes isolated from his family as well. The pattern is upset by the arrival of Harry, the mother's cousin, who is to stay with them. Harry turns out to be a sociable, pliant man who quickly is placed in the role of 'man about the house' - a role that the father had never played.

> Until Harry came to live with us, my sister, my mother and I did on our own most of the things that families do together ... Ever

> since Harry came, he's been doing for all three of us ... those things that only a man can do, in a family, and that my father has never done. (FF, p.173)

The crisis flares up when the father tries to reassert himself, and fails, to his humiliation because everyone in the family saw it. He takes out his frustration on Emily, the elder sister, by smacking her face, and then smacking his wife when she remonstrates with him. The mother then tries to prevent the younger sister, the narrator, seeing what was happening, but, as she points out, it was too late - she had seen it all.

There is a complication to the story's ending, though. Not only does she claim to have seen everything, but she says, "There's nothing left to hide from me." (FF, p.178). There is always an ironic perspective when a narrator is involved in the action being described, and there seems to be an ironic suggestion that the girl, in her presumption of omniscience, is deluding herself.

But even with this complication, the ending seems anti-climactic. Is it nothing more than smug self-assurance - covering up her reaction to the revelation of her father's humiliation? In such a case, Woodward's comments would apply; that the quality of the telling obscures the lack of substance of the story itself.

The story, "The Last Kiss" deals with old age, but not with the self-deception that old age people practise - as was the case in the earlier stories. The central figure is Van As, but he is always presented from a distance. We never enter his consciousness, and he never says anything directly, in the story. In fact

the story is centred more on the fluctuations of his reputation than on the man himself. His social decline is set against the fact of his having been Mayor of Noorddorp in the early days. The story itself starts with a long reported history of Van As and of the town's growth. In this history, there are one or two places where the point of view shifts to include some comments from townspeople about Van As - in this way allowing the attitudes of the town towards Van As to be revealed. Only when Van As is in his old age does the mode shift from reportlike to scenic presentation. The scenic presentation serves to introduce the teenagers who travel daily on the same train as Van As, and shows how Van As becomes the object of the pranks. Then, at the crisis of the story, one girl and Van As happen both to take a later train than normal, and what happens on the train is never explicitly revealed. It appears that Van As tried to, or succeeded in kissing the girl, against her will. The story changes rapidly then, with the point of view shifting from Van As, firstly to the girl, then to a medley of opinions from townspeople generally, including Van As's family and the girl's family.

The structure is rambling but effective. The lack of specificity in the portrayal of Van As allows a general view of the history to emerge, and the sudden changes in point of view at the end allow for the portrayal of society's attitudes. Van As remains a shadowy figure - we never form fixed or definite impressions of him. This lack of human outline is suggested by the opening line and the second last line of the story. "When people become characters, they cease to be regarded as human ..." (FF.

p.34) and "It was not so much what he had done ... but that, for one crazy moment, he had stepped out of character ... and signalled" (FF, p.43). This framework is reinforced by the use of a Gordimerian emblematic comment at the end of the story.

> It was as if the town's only statue, a shabby thing of an obscure general on a horse, standing in a dusty park and crawled over by urchins, were to have been observed, bleeding. (FF, p.43)

Van As's decline is presented in a neutral, low-keyed tone. No moral is drawn about the changeability of fortune, or the inability of some people to adopt to changing circumstances. The town sees him as old Van As, and then poor old Van As, but nobody sees him as a human being. Because we do not get any assistance from the tone, we have some difficulty in making a judgement about Van As. There is doubt as to the causes for his decline - was his inability to change with the times a failure on his part, or an aspect of the times themselves, that some people are left behind? Is his passivity after his wife's death a matter for judgement or sympathy? Does he in fact do anything to the girl at all, or is her report of what happened another rather cruel joke on the old man? The story does not provide answers to these questions - except that in the emblematic comment (and considering the importance of the device) the significant word is "bleeding" - the statue, a non-living representation of humanity, is endowed with the very stuff of life itself - blood. And "bleeding" is suffering, and suffering seems to impose a moral duty of relief on anyone who observes it.

The next thematic group consists of those stories which deal with marriage. In Chapter Two, there was some reference to

marriages in Gordimer's writing not being very successful, and there were three stories in that collection which dealt largely with marriage. However, as we have seen already in this chapter, the themes of the stories in this collection are more subtly presented, and very often the single theme pattern of the early stories is replaced by a complexity of themes interwoven into the story with perhaps one theme dominant.

The title story, "Friday's Footprint", is set in an undefined location in the central African bush. The central figure is Rita Cunningham, who, after the death of her first husband, Arthur, married his half-brother, Johnny - a marriage of convenience as Johnny had been a general help for his half-brother and Rita before Arthur was drowned. The story deals with her growth within the two relationships, set out in such a way as to act as contrasts to each other. Her first marriage was one in which she was entirely subordinate to a man who was totally capable in nearly everything he attempted. After his death, she marries a man who needs loving, who needs support. For the first time, she finds herself opening out in love, both emotionally and sexually - something the first marriage had never allowed. But with this love for Johnny comes a guilt towards Arthur, and this, coupled with Johnny's general defensiveness, does not allow her relationship with Johnny to flourish. In the end, the casual game of filling out a newspaper quiz about the state of marriage brings home to her the fact that she was betraying Johnny as well in that this relationship had become empty too. She tries to call up the memory of the safe comfort

of her marriage to Arthur, by trying to visualise the scene of his drowning (as she had done many times before), but this time is unable to.

The structure of the story is a succession of insights unfolding into the final revelation of self-knowledge, and the exposing of self-deception. The moments of insights occur at various stages, and their effect is cumulative, rather than climactic.

There is about Rita Cunningham an ordinariness that seems to visitors to the hotel to be like Friday's footprint in the sand - something known in a strange environment. Her first husband Arthur had been a strong man. "He always did whatever he liked and got whatever he wanted." (FF, p.18). The relationship is described in terms which could be seen as ambiguous. "He had met her on one of his trips down south, taken a fancy to her and that was that." (FF, p.18). "She never knew him, of course, because she had nothing of the deep need to possess his thought and plumb his feelings that come of love." (FF, p.18). A comment like that already sketches the outline of the themes of the story. Johnny Cunningham is presented as a man apart, whose interest in other people is sporadic and largely for self-gratification. It seems to be a protective device that keeps him separate. When he and Rita are thrown together after Arthur's death, his comments persuade her not to sell up the hotel, and when he acknowledges to Rita that he has had an affair with one of the guests, it is as if all sorts of barriers are suddenly dropped between them, and intimacy was possible for the first time. The effect of this change is described in her, but not in him. "She blushed, like a

wave of illness ... And so, suddenly, there was intimacy; it existed between them as if it had always been there, taken for granted." (FF, p.25). When they are married, and their relationship becomes sexual, she changes. "She had for him a hundred small feelings more tender than any she had ever known." (FF, p.27). When the love-making occurs less and less frequently, she starts feeling ashamed, and she uses imaginative recreation of events in her mind as a comfort. From this constant going over and over of incidents grows a feeling of guilt - especially towards Arthur. She begins to imagine that she had special feelings for Johnny before Arthur died, and her guilt in that area grows as well. In coming to grips with the "terrifying freedom of her mind" she forces herself to "hide what only she knew was there - the shameful joy of loving." (FF, p.29). The relationship with Johnny falls apart - through a mixture of his over-defensiveness and her guilt, despite the fact that they both needed the relationship more than Arthur ever needed one. By the time the final disclosure takes place, we are aware of its potential, and so in a sense awaiting it. And with that almost tragic sense of inevitability, the final exposure of her inner self occurs.

The story is about repression, a psychological condition observed most closely in Rita, in the way her guilt smothers the sexual communication she can achieve with Johnny; in Johnny, who is unable to sustain his natural sexuality in the face of his imposed repression of himself; and in Arthur. Arthur's imposition of himself, i.e. his inability to communicate

sexually, on Rita becomes internalised and acts as a sort of 'super-ego' to which she turns for guidance and comfort. This inadequacy is revealed symbolically when she can no longer conjure up the vision of his drowning.

> There is no question of psychiatric technicalities: simply of two husbands, one who communicates sexually and one who does not. Rita's tragedy is simply that she is not used to the possibility of sexual communication. [9]

The themes are not simple, nor are they simply presented. Their interwoven complexities, and the fact that so much is only suggested rather than spelled out, show the extent of Gordimer's development as a writer. It also to a large measure refutes Woodward's criticism (as far as this story is concerned). The ending of the story, i.e. the realisation by Rita that comes from the result of the newspaper quiz, is not a coup de théâtre because the realisation is implicit already before that point of the story is reached. So the ending is not the uncovering of dramatic and unprepared for surprises, but rather the emergence of an expected insight.

"Check Yes or No" also deals with a woman's sudden realisation of the state of her marriage, and of herself. The difference is that she realises her marriage is a good one. The central figure is Phoebe Secker, a remarried divorcee. She and her husband, her son and two other children are at the circus. She recognises former neighbours of hers, the Dunns, in the audience, and this prompts a flashback to the time when she was

[9] Kevin Magarey, p.21

divorced, and living in a flat in a very unconventional life-style. The Dunns had regarded her with a strange mixture of incomprehension and sympathy. Her husband, trying to secure their seats from the people who had taken them, gets into a scuffle, and is knocked down, to Phoebe's absolute shame and embarrassment. She feels he has let her down because she didn't want the Dunns to misinterpret this, and to think that she had not risen above what she had been as a divorcee. She wants to leave, even though an old woman sitting close by had made room for them all. But she doesn't, because she becomes conscious of the high-wire act - of a man inside a sack, trying to walk the wire. The sack cuts out all chance of sight and he has to walk the wire by feel, balance and instinct. Phoebe has a sudden surge of total identification with him - she feels her life, and all mankind's, is summed up by his predicament. Armed and strengthened by this insight, she is able to reassure the woman next to her, and is also able to appreciate her husband's worth again.

The structure of the story is that of a single incident leading to a moment of heightened awareness and insight. There is the one extended flashback, but otherwise the story runs in current time sequence. The themes that are developed include her understanding of marriage as an institution; and her insight into herself as a woman, and as a component of 'the vast common human state.' When she first sees the Dunns, she feels a sublime sense of confidence in herself. "I have made it, and with ease, and with nearly all of myself to spare, she thought with serenity." (FF, p.97). She also wants her former neighbours, who had known

her at her lowest ebb in her life to realise her new status and happiness. So when her husband, of whom "strength and nervous determination (are) the overt qualities with their implication of the private covert one of tenderness and self-confidence" (FF, p,97) uncharacteristically gets himself knocked down into the sawdust, in full view of everyone, Phoebe's mortification is extreme. The strategic placing of the point of high focus of the story at this moment allows the reader a dramatic reversal of expectations, which strengthens the story's impact. The high focus allows various insights as well.

> It suddenly comes to her [Phoebe] in a rush of identification with the hazardous and lonely progress of the acrobat that she has achieved something. What it is is left unsaid, but in terms of the events can only mean her now happy marriage ... and this is her illumination; no matter what the Dunns think, she is happily married. [10]

There is another aspect of her realisation.

> For recognising herself in the perilously enclosed artiste restores to Phoebe van der Camp her human balance, and suddenly she is able to extend sympathy to both the peasant-like stranger on one side of her, and her husband - essentially eminently presentable, for all his having humiliatingly failed her - on the other. [11]

The "Check Yes or No" of the title comes from the flashback. After Neil, her son, had been punished for some naughtiness, he had run away for a few hours, leaving a note behind:"'Do you want

10 David Hendricks, p.86.

11 Lionel Abrahams, "The Transparent Ego," English Studies in Africa, 3, No. 2 (Sept. 1960), p.151.

me to go away for ever, or do you want me to come back? Check Yes or No.'" (FF, p.96). The realisation at the end of the story provides Phoebe herself with the answer to her own version of the question.

In the earlier story "Enemies",[12] Mrs Clara Hansen is presented as a woman within whom two tendencies are opposed to each other - the so-called 'enemies' of the title. The one is controlled, aloof, distant; the other would like her to be self-indulgent and relaxed. "A Style of her Own" takes up the character of Mrs Hansen again, and attempts to present background on her dualistic personality. The story is unique - not only in that a character is used again from a previous story,[13] but also in the radical division of the story into two parts. There is an introduction which occurs in the present, and constitutes the first section of the story, and the incident which occurs thirty years before the present, as the other section of the story. The sections are linked in that the second section is an illustration of the point Mrs Hansen makes to the old ladies at the Barret-Tromp Hotel. However, the two sections need to be examined separately. As is customary in Gordimer's writing, privileged and pretentious characters come under the most scathing attack. The old ladies who stay at the Barret-Tromp are shown in all

12 Nadine Gordimer, Six Feet of the Country (London: Gollancz, 1956), p.161.

13 The journalist Carl Church is referred to in A Guest of Honour, (p.337), and he is also the central figure in the title story of Livingstone's Companions.

their weaknesses, inanity and vacuity. Their conversation is in stereotypes and clichés; petty jealousies and false compliments constitute the bulk of their talk; and repetition is common. Mrs Hansen is the central object of attention because she is so different. She has the appearance of poise and dignified charm; she is active and able and far from garrulous. However, as Gordimer was later to say, through Colonel Bray in A Guest of Honour, "'Everybody has a private vision of what he could be at the other end of the scale, the very bottom. Nobody else recognises it, only oneself.'"[14] So it is with Mrs Hansen.

> The old ladies whom she found repulsive and with whom she had nothing whatever in common - they attracted her in some secret, reluctant part of herself that she wouldn't explore. They appealed to some imprisoned whimperer inside her who wanted to be the old lady that she herself could never be. (FF, p.70)

This is the key to the unity of the story, despite its distinctly separate sections. Mrs Hansen is what she had become because she had followed the path of rigidity and self-control. At the key moment of choice, she refuses to allow herself to become self-indulgent and weak, but instead forces herself into a role that has had to be maintained from that point onwards. The second section of the story reveals the incident in her married life which Mrs Hansen recalls as the starting point. Her second husband leaves one evening ostensibly to go to an appointment in town. She, knowing her husband's propensity for infidelity, had

[14] Nadine Gordimer, A Guest of Honour (London: Cape, 1970), p.289.

stopped inviting women friends around to their flat for fear that he would start affairs with them. The only woman who did come to the flat was an insipid and plain seamstress. It turns out that Mrs Hansen suspects her husband of having an affair even with her. She takes a taxi to the seamstress's house, and finds her husband's car parked around the corner. She forces herself to confront the woman at the front door. With icy composure, she says: "'Tell my husband he has left the lights of his car burning.'" (FF, p.81). It is only in the final sentence that we sense that Mrs Hansen is aware of her own responsibility in the situation. She mocks him, for what he has resorted to, "the pale, plain old maid who had blackheads in the creases of her neck" (FF, p.80), but she also mourns that her lack of communication and love might have helped drive her husband out. She has to force herself to go through with it, in order to have to believe it. It is her determination to go through with it, to drive down the weaknesses in herself that gives her 'a style of her own.'

"Our Bovary" presents another aspect of the marriage theme. This story presents the life of Sonia Smith, a contemporary and local Madame Bovary, a woman endowed with vital beauty but saddled with a colourless husband. Again the motif of man as the outsider is raised, but the portrayal of Herb Smith and his friend Mr Oldfield is a succinct and necessary component of the central portrait.

It is a rambling life history of Sonia Smith, who starts off as a poor beautiful girl who is married to Herb Smith, and who soon produces two daughters. Then, at the age when most of

her contemporaries were crossing from youth into age, she decides not to take the step, and instead to carry on with a flamboyance that denies the effects of time. She embarks on a pursuit of the arts; art, music, pottery; she dresses up with flair and grandeur; has one or two minor affairs with local people. These were tolerated, even approved of (secretly) by the local community, but when she starts a serious and blatant affair with 'a dance-band johnny' from Johannesburg, the town's opinion of her turns. However, nothing catastrophic happens. Herb does not divorce her, nor does she seek a separation from him. Other affairs follow, Herb dies, and eventually she grows old. It is not that outline though that constitutes the story. The story is primarily concerned with the variety of reactions and the shifting attitudes of people towards Sonia Smith.

The first set of attitudes is that of the men, Herb Smith and his close friend Mr Oldfield. Herb Smith is supposed to have asked Mr Oldfield's advice on marrying her, and on divorcing her. Mr Oldfield's reply to each question was the same. "' You must do as you think best, Herb.'" (FF, p.139,146). As the narrator, Joan Oldfield points out, the question really asks: shall a man dare to risk "the taking of something not intended for him"? (FF, p.146). Mr Oldfield, who did not accept the risk, nevertheless was not prepared to try to stop Herb Smith taking it, because in reality, Mr Oldfield himself would very much have liked to. However, the image of the two of them, both small men, as Shetland ponies, is illustrative of their insignificance in the light of Sonia's magnificence. Mrs

Oldfield's attitudes change with the changes that Sonia undergoes. At first, when Sonia was newly married, they seem close friends, sharing the same pursuits - babies, biscuit recipes. Then, when Sonia emerges from the chrysalis, butterfly-like into her flamboyance, Mrs Oldfield generates an increasing hostility towards her, prompted no doubt by envy and a reluctance to acknowledge Sonia's right to flamboyance. The elaborate insults (p.142) reveal the delight each took in scoring a point against the other: Sonia on Mrs Oldfield for her grey hairs; Mrs Oldfield on Sonia by reminding her that her husband was no better than Mr Oldfield. However, when Sonia embarks on her serious affair, she visits Mrs Oldfield, whose advice is tinged with materialistic considerations and a measure of apparent partisanship, contrary to expectations. Her advice reveals also a conflict of values personalised in the form of Sonia and Mrs Oldfield, in which 'respectability' is revealed as selfish and deceitful. Sonia is the social outcast, the adultress, the uninhibited pagan, but she is also warm, spontaneous and generous. Mrs Oldfield is respectable, but cold, calculating, selfish and deceitful.[15] At the end, Sonia and Mrs Oldfield spend a lot of time together - talking about 'what women usually talk about.'

The other attitude that is obliquely presented is that of Joan Oldfield, the narrator. She does not pass much explicit comment, but her attitude, deduced from the epithets she uses to

[15] C.J.Millar, "The Contemporary South African Short Story," MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1962, p.52.

describe Sonia seem to be those of admiration. " ... gorgeous. Her lips were curved like a statue's at the corners, her eyes were brown as a cow's, her skin was thickly creamy, and she had auburn hair that looked as silky and luxuriant as an opera singer's wig." (FF, p.139). When Sonia passes comment on Joan, even then Joan's reaction is not hostile. She sees it as :

> ... the playful strike from the paw of the tigress, arising out of the rippling sensuality of her own magnificent body; not meant to hurt, but careless if it should hurt, in the manner of creatures who have nothing to fear. (FF, p.145)

The ending provides a further attitude - in that Mr Oldfield corrects Joan when she says she remembers Sonia's beauty. The beauty that Mr Oldfield remembers is not the flamboyant and extravagant beauty of her thirties, but the naïve and innocent beauty when she was seventeen.

"A Thing of the Past" is set in Egypt, but in a sense, the setting is incidental to the central theme of the story.[16] Loosely hung together, it is a story of the background to, and the course of the Leonard-Achilet marriage. Irene Achilet, daughter of a prosperous French Egyptian family had been married at a very young age to a French archaeologist, Jules Sidon. Separated by the war, they develop along different lines; both have affairs, and the marriage is ended before peace is declared.

Irene remained on cordial terms with her ex-husband, and

[16] Gordimer visited Egypt herself in 1958/9, and in fact an article describing the visit was published in National and English Review, February 1959. The story was published first in Encounter, September 1959.

with his second wife when he remarries. Irene herself remarries - to the South African, Max Leonard, whom she had met during the war, and with whom she had developed an affair. For some years, things go well, but after the King is banished, an exodus of the foreign community begins, which intensifies after the Suez crisis. The Leonard-Achilets stay, as do the Sidons, in the hope of being able to get some of their wealth out of the country, or else to be able to fulfil their prospects. They are then trapped into a meaningless existence in Egypt, in which they remain foreigners. The point is strongly made for Max Leonard, in that on the one occasion that he returns to South Africa after his marriage,

> his brother had said, 'You are not one of us at all, any more': he had come at last to understand what these men felt, few, guilty and unloved, in the black man's continent, belonging not there nor yet anywhere. (FF, p.162,163)

After Suez, the South African syndrome becomes real for Max again. The reason why they stay is to retain tenure of their possessions, and because Irene feels that her whole life had been lived there, and she didn't want to leave it. When finally she does change her mind, and does tell her husband of her determination to go, he feels relieved, but then learns that the Sidons had also made the decision to leave, and that Irene had known that. There is a dulling disillusionment, as he realises that she is prepared to leave now only because Jules Sidon, her link with her childhood and the world of her childhood, is making the break. When he goes, she can go too - not because she still wants his presence, but because his leaving sanctions hers. The

'thing of the past' is both the failed marriage which continues to exert a subtle influence, and the life they had led in pre-Suez Egypt. The story makes a point about the necessity of changing one's outlook to correspond with changes in historical reality, in order to escape the pointlessness of living with the preoccupations and understandings of a world that has passed by. This point, although made of Egypt, is forcibly rendered relevant to South Africa as well by the centrality of Max Leonard.

The structure of the story, although loose, and to a certain extent spilling beyond the bounds of a short story, gathers itself together into the moment of realisation at the end, when Max Leonard is forced into a new understanding of his wife.

The next two stories deal with the exposing of a façade - one of Gordimer's constant preoccupations. The first, "The Gentle Art" is in one way the most representative story in this collection, in that it reveals most clearly the development of Gordimer's techniques. An earlier story on this theme, such as "The Soft Voice of the Serpent"[17] had a classical simplicity of structure - an introduction, followed by a moment of high focus, out of which came the revelation, usually in the ending. The stories of this collection show an advance on that pattern in that they do not rely on only one revelation, but on a number interacting on each other, and it is through and out of the interaction that the story's revelation occurs. If there is a

[17] Nadine Gordimer, The Soft Voice of the Serpent (London: Gollancz, 1953), p.1.

revelation in the ending, it becomes one of a number, rather than the sole insight that gives coherence to the story.

In "The Gentle Art", the façade being exposed is the shallow sentimentality of Vivien McEwan. Her perception of reality is constantly affected by false illusions of, specifically in this story, men, hunters and hunting, danger and excitement. She has a very 'romantic' notion of men as virile, tall, outdoor types: she sees hunters as men endowed with abundant qualities of ruthlessness, recklessness and animal courage. Hunting is just exciting, with no danger involved. She has no notion of the experience of Mrs Baird, the hunter's wife, and her fears for her husband. The story line is simple. Jimmy Baird and his two associates take the McEwans out for a night hunting trip for crocodiles, which they shoot for their skins. They encounter three crocodiles - the first escapes; the second, a small baby, is pulled into the boat and shown to the McEwans, and the third is shot. On their return, Mrs Baird feeds them coffee and sandwiches. There are a number of moments when the theme is revealed through the heightened focus on a particular detail which reveals an illusion held by Vivien - for example, her comments on Jimmy Baird's dress - overalls. "'That's how I like a man to look!" (FF, p.107). The following passage is specially important:

> But Jimmy Baird was not so easily to be led to repeat, first-hand, as she longed to hear it, the story of one of his exploits famous in the territory; one of the stories out of which she had built up her idea of what such men are like. That idea had had to go through some modification already; she had always loathed "tiny men" - that was, any man under the standard six-foot-one which she had

> set when she married Ricks. But although her picture of a man had shrunk to fit Jimmy Baird, three days ago, other aspects of it had not changed. Everything he said and did she saw as a manifestation of the qualities she read into his exploits and that she admired most - ruthlessness, recklessness, animal courage. (FF, p.107)

Vivien does not seem to appreciate the danger of the expedition. She is "like a child on a swing" (FF, p.108). Later on, "she wanted to giggle, like a child watching a Hollywood adventure film" (FF, p.113) and "She was in such a state of excitement that she was unsteady, like a drunk" (FF, p.117), and "Vivien McEwan sat back, plumping herself with sighs of triumph. She could not control her excited laughter." (FF, p.118). At the end of the story, she asks Mrs Baird what she had done, and does not understand the implication in the reply, "I waited." Mrs Baird, aware of the dangers, was apprehensively and single mindedly concerned only with the safe return of her husband. Vivien McEwan is shown to be an enthusiastic overwhelming child - naïve, but with certain half-formed preconceptions about experience. Jimmy Baird seems to contradict most of her illusions, but the story does not show us that she learns anything about herself from having her illusions shown up, with the façade of shallow sentimentality revealed for what it is. The treatment she receives is mild, ironic - the title of the story providing the first indication of the possibilities of irony.

The other story which exposes a façade is "The Night the Favourite Came Home". This time the façade being exposed is the hollowness of respectability. Duncan Miller and Freda Grant

visit a war-time friend of Duncan whom he had not seen since the war thirteen years before. They arrive to find the house in a state of high excitement because the hostess, Vera Ardendyk, had backed the favourite in the Durban July and it had won her eighty-five pounds. The party is loud and festive, and Freda, who does not get drunk (as everyone else seems to be doing) leaves the party early to get to bed. She finds she has left her books in the lounge, and feels she can't go back to fetch them. However, she feels very lost without them, and makes elaborate plans to ensure that she doesn't forget them in the morning.

There is a considerable difference now in social terms between the relative status of the two men. Miller and Grant are university lecturers (living together), while Ardendyk works on the mines. Again the men seem to occupy peripheral positions in the story - which is centered on the juxtaposition of Freda Grant and Vera Ardendyk.

Vera Ardendyk is loud, common, warm-hearted, spontaneous, and vital. In comparison, Freda is prissy and pale. She has certain vanities and affectations. "She prided herself, in a quiet, solitary way, on the manner in which she adapted herself to her company." (FF, p.46), yet this means more that she effaces herself in company to be unexceptional, whereas Vera delights in drawing the full attention of the whole gathering to herself and enjoying it. Vera is not unperceptive, though:

> ... and with the touch noticed Freda, for a moment, the space of a rift in her elation, for perhaps the first time since Freda had come into the house, seeing, in that moment, shrewdly and bluntly, right through Freda's polite friendliness and attention. (FF, p.52)

Freda refuses to get drunk despite the fact that this makes her an outsider, yet the presentation of the party contains such gusto and energy that the reader is tempted to believe it carries Gordimer's approval. Even Duncan is involved in the party - he "had the bewildered, yet pleased look of the class swot who has suddenly been taken up by the gang." (FF, p.54). So even at this point, the lines of the story are drawn. The reserve, the respectability of Freda is placed alongside the excitement of the gathering, and found wanting. The passage at the end reveals Freda's incompleteness in wanting her books (as a substitute?) rather than the company of people. The façade she clings to - of her own adaptability - is seen in its inadequacy - both in the party itself, and in the privacy of her room. Again the theme is presented not just through one manifestation or revelation, but rather through a complex of interwoven revelations. The tone is neutral - we do not really have much help from the tone in deciding on our own attitudes to adopt towards characters and situation.

"The Path of the Moon's Dark Fortnight" is in some aspects an unsatisfying story. It is about the preparations for a luncheon party, and then the party itself, and through the interaction of the characters involved, certain ideas are presented for consideration. The difficulty with the story seems to be a disjointedness of its component parts. Gordimer does rely on implicit meanings in her stories, rather than explicit - but normally the component parts readily coalesce into a unity through which is presented the basic or primary theme of the story. In this story, that primary idea is not very readily

available.

Working on the assumption, normally correct for Gordimer in her earlier stories, that the ending is a part of the central revelations, this story should be about purity and defilement. The boy, William, after eating two mouthfuls of the pea soup (made with chicken stock) detects the presence of the chicken, and this upsets him considerably, because for religious reasons, he has become a vegetarian. The difficulty in explaining this story is that the link between that insight and the rest of the story is slight. However, following the lead of the theme of purity and defilement, we are then meant to see the social satire contained in the dialogue at the luncheon party as an instance of it, and even the fastidiousness and high taste of Manuel de Vos becomes suspect. According to the lines of the Bhagavad-Gita, the two paths of the moon's fortnight - the light and the dark - lead to heaven (nirvana) or back down to earth, the place of defilement. As the story is entitled "The Path of the Moon's Dark Fortnight", it would seem to indicate that the whole experience of the story tends towards defilement. There might be a further comment implied in the fact that the boy noticed the chicken in the soup whereas the mother Ruth, also a vegetarian, did not.

The difficulty is in deciding on the nature of the defilement. Is it the collapse of innocence? But the boy has done nothing significant to warrant such a reaction. What is the significance of the rat in the swimming pool? - or the rabbit hutch of Carola Bonheim? Why is the conversation of the guests

likened to the "whooping and cackling" of hens? A lot of this imagery is very strong. But on structural grounds, there does not seem to be a clear co-ordinating principle, and so the articulation of the theme is hindered by the divergence of these points, rather than assisted by them. But the points individually considered, show remarkable qualities of accuracy, description and insight. This is exactly the point that Woodward seems to be making. "That very gift of sensuous particularity, however, often becomes even in her short stories, a kind of virtuoso display - an ultimately meaningless accretion of surface vitality to conceal a hollowness of content."[18]

The last story in this collection, "An Image of Success", has been described as a novella, and certainly it oversteps the limits of the short story in a number of ways. It shows the developments of two, and not just one main character: it deals with far more than a 'slice of life'; it is neither short nor does it have a 'single effect' - all of which points contradict the characteristics of the modern short story as described by Millar.[19]

Nevertheless, it is a piece of writing the analysis of which repays study. The story is essentially about the speaker's rise to prosperity and a position of power. In order to achieve that, he has to sacrifice certain things, and become certain things that he was not, and did not have to become. To illustrate this process of loss, there is a counterpoint story showing the

[18] Woodward, p.3.

[19] Millar, pp.5-17.

reverse process of a man who starts off with power and wealth, and loses it all because he was no longer prepared to sacrifice those things that he wanted.

The link between the two men is clearly drawn at the start and finish of the novella. "When I first got to know Charles Butters he was at just about the age and stage of a man's life that I am now, I suppose." (FF, p.179), and at the end, after the speaker had attended the funeral of Charles Butters, he reflects "the other man in me, that had never come into existence, had just been buried under the earth" (FF, p.224). The story starts with the speaker meeting Mr Butters, one of his law firm's biggest clients, and Mr Butters gives the speaker a lift to his date. Mr Butters meets the girls, and the development of the story starts when Mr Butters decides to divorce his wife in order to be able to marry one of the girls. Mr Butters, having taken what was not his for the taking starts losing everything he had, and this comes to include his second wife as well. He realises that the only thing she ever asked of him was finally the divorce, which he gave immediately. As Butters loses his position and wealth, the speaker gains in position and wealth, because he does all the 'right' things - he marries correctly, works diligently, and so on. The ending of the story comes when Butters dies, and the speaker reflects on the relationship between the two of them.

In a way, Butters' choice is regarded with a fascinated envy. When Butters announces that he wants to marry June Williams, the speaker comments:

> Charles Butters was stretching out his hand

> and taking what had been agreed (between myself and that order of society in which I wanted my place) must be forgone: the small, sweet, wild apple that was not for daily consumption. He was making the delightfully inconsequent, of consequence; he was plucking the one-day lily ... He was breaking the rule ... (FF, p.195,196)

The speaker himself makes a different choice, yet though it was he who introduced Butters to 'the one-day lily',

> I was too firmly and comfortably attached to my own kind to want to break away from them ... One day, inevitably (and this, in fact, was what I did) I should go back to the weekend for good, and marry one of the daughters of my own kind ... (FF, p.184)

His surrender to middle class values and ways contrasts with Butters' refusal to be bound by them, and even though Butters, for this defiance, is 'punished' by his loss of material possessions and middle class constraints, the decision is not entirely uncritically presented. Butters remains an enigmatic character throughout, whereas we tend to lose whatever liking we develop for the young speaker in the face of what he becomes.

But characteristically, Gordimer maintains a balance between the two situations by her careful control of the tone of the story. Further, it is not just a story about the choices that two individual and contrasting men make. It is a story that shows the complex interaction of moral, social and psychological problems.[20] The story is about apparent success and apparent failure - and it poses the question, "What is success?" Again, characteristically, Gordimer gives no answer to that question.

[20] Millar, p.52.

To what extent then is Woodward's criticism valid? For two stories at least, "Harry's Presence" and "The Path of the Moon's Dark Fortnight", it clearly pinpoints their weakness which is that the quality of the telling obscures the lack of substance of the story. In various earlier stories in previous collections, this criticism could be even more strongly made. But most of the stories in this collection reveal considerable depths of implicit meaning and Woodward's comments do not do justice to the technical developments apparent in these stories. The tendency of Gordimer's early stories to have the full weight of the realisation dependent on the ending is replaced by a much subtler pattern of interacting realisations from which, at a higher level of abstraction, comes the story's unifying realisation. The importance of analysing the stories' structures is shown when the reader, sensitive to the higher level of abstraction that Gordimer's stories are now capable of, is not disappointed when the ending of these stories does not carry the full weight of the realisation contained in the story, as the earlier stories had.

CHAPTER FIVE

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

The stories collected and published in the volume Not for Publication in 1965 constitute a turning point in Gordimer's short story writing. In one sense this was demanded of her - her previous collection, Friday's Footprint, had won an international literary prize, and a writer of Gordimer's stature would not have stood still in a situation like that, content simply to continue the pattern brought to a high point of perfection in the stories of that collection. However, there were far more pressing reasons why Gordimer's writing was bound to change, and these were occurring outside of purely literary considerations in the real world which was always the starting point for Gordimer's fiction. She has often been described as a writer who is acutely responsive to the historical developments around her, and also of her own reaction to them - i.e. responsive both in the public and the private mode.[1] It is going to be the intention of this chapter to reveal how the external pressures of events in South Africa determined the direction of change in her writing, and also how they affected the nature of her writing as a result.

The period during which these stories were written is one of

[1] Dorothy Driver makes this point extensively in her paper entitled, "Nadine Gordimer: The Politicisation of Women", and she refers to a number of critics. Dorothy Driver, "Nadine Gordimer: The Politicisation of Women," English in Africa, 10, No. 2 (1983), pp.29,30.

the most turbulent and decisive in recent South African history. It has been referred to as the 'false start of the South African revolution'[2] - a false start in that the massive state repression and clampdown nipped the movement in the bud. Mention of some of the key events will reveal the extent of the turbulence. Sharpeville, Langa, Cato Manor; the attempted assassination of Dr. Verwoerd, the referendum and South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth; the flight of capital and skilled manpower; the banning of the key African organisations, the ANC and the PAC; the formation of Ukonto U Siwze, and the various acts of sabotage; the formation and sabotage of the ARM, the uprisings in Pondoland, Zeerust and Sekhukhuneland, the decimation of the black leadership by the Rivonia trial, the bannings of individuals and the movement into exile of many others, and then finally the stunned silence of an exhausted world that was officially regarded as the return of law and order. However, on the smaller scale, repression was taking a toll as well. "Cultural repression accompanied the political; The Publications and Entertainments Act, promulgated in 1963, allowed for the banning of everything from scenes of 'night life' and 'physical poses', to matter 'prejudicial to the safety of the state'."[3] Organisations were banned, magazines were banned, writers were banned. Many black writers were forced into exile.

And Nadine Gordimer was involved in all this in both her

[2] Stephen Clingman, "History from the Inside: the Novels of Nadine Gordimer," Journal of Southern African Studies, 9, No. 2 (1980), p.180.

[3] Clingman, p.180.

public and private capacities. As a South African, she would have been aware of, and involved in all around her at the public level, but it was as a private individual most of all that she was aware of the human aspect of it, the private side of the public world. She had become friendly with Es'kia Mphahlele and the DRUM set in the '50s, [4] and many of the people involved in the Treason Trial (1956-1961) were in her life; Chief Luthuli stayed in Gordimer's house during the Trial. She said after Sharpeville and the ensuing repression, "almost everyone I knew was in jail, or fleeing ..." [5] The importance of this human dimension must be seen as of the highest importance, especially in a study dealing with the short stories. Gordimer said in 1956:

> I am not a politically minded person by nature. I don't suppose, if I had lived elsewhere, my writing would have reflected politics much. If at all. As it is, I have come to the abstractions of politics through the flesh and blood of individual behaviour. I didn't know what politics was about until I saw it all happening to people. [6]

The importance of this statement to a short story writer is apparent - it is really only in a novel that one can offer a thorough-going analysis of a political system or ideology, and this Gordimer does, for example, on socialism in emergent Africa in A Guest of Honour. In the short stories, she concentrates her

[4] Clingman, pp.173-177.

[5] Clingman, p.176.

[6] Alan Ross, "A Writer in South Africa," London Magazine, 5, No. 2 (May 1965), p.23.

vision onto one aspect of the whole, and sees it primarily as a human situation embodying in its larger context only, the political, social and economic patterns of the world it creates.

There are only four stories (out of the fifteen) in this collection that seem, as far as the structure goes, to be significantly different enough from the others and from what had preceded them, to warrant special attention. These four are: "Message in a Bottle" in which an entirely new and, in the Gordimerian canon, a unique structure is used; "Good Climate, Friendly Inhabitants", and "Some Monday For Sure" - both of which are interior monologues, a form that Gordimer had not used before; and "One Whole Year, And Even More", in which the key to understanding is the realisation of the unreliability of the narrator. (This unreliability is also a feature of "Good Climate, Friendly Inhabitants".) Before dealing with the structure of these stories, I want to show the basic similarity of structure in the remaining stories. All except "The African Magician" have a third person narrative situation, with a fairly consistent vantage point, and a largely similar voice. The exception, "The African Magician" is narrated in the first person, but the narrator is so peripheral to the action as to be almost a third person narrator - as far as the central action is concerned. The basic structure which emerges is the same as that found in some of the stories of Friday's Footprint. There is a revelation tied into the ending. There are moment of high focus when insight is achieved. And it is the case that the central revelation is the result of the interaction of various insights, with the ending being one of them. This is a structure that is

well suited to Gordimer's approach and interests, but because of its consistency, does not now again need to be spelled out for each story. Analysis of one story's structure can serve as typical for the rest. In "A Company of Laughing Faces", the introduction is swift and straightforward - the family background, the decision to take the holiday, the journey. Then the interaction of people is subjected to an increasingly close analysis, with Kathy's (the daughter) actions coming under closest scrutiny. There are a number of moments when insight occurs: the self-realisation when she is accepted into the crowd; the incident where her naïvety results in her not realising what she was precipitating by accompanying the young man to his room alone; the final encounter with the drowned boy which she keeps to herself; and then the ending which reveals the extent of her mother's ignorance of what really was going on inside Kathy's head. The story is about growing up, and it depends on the interaction of all those moments for its full realisation. The same features will be revealed in analysing any of the other stories in this category. However, the four mentioned earlier need very careful consideration.

"Message in a Bottle" is the most complex story in the collection. Its unity derives from the first person narration, and the conclusion drawn by the narrator at the end. However, the story itself is a sophisticated arrangement of a triad of thematically linked focal points. Three separate and seemingly unrelated focuses are presented. In each, private griefs, private and incommunicable agonies are observed, but not shared,

and it is only in the conclusion that we are given the key to understanding the connection between the three moments.

The narrator is a married woman. During the course of the day, she takes her daughter, who is suffering from an eye infection, to a coffee shop after a painful visit to the doctor. The child, matured beyond her years by pain, accepts this token, this flattery for what it's worth. The narrator finds now she cannot reassure the child and distraction has become almost insulting. The mother says, "She resents my sympathy because I have not her pain."[7] The first of the three experiences of the day occurs in the coffee shop when the narrator observes a young woman and an elderly man in the coffee shop, and the woman is crying, but talking, pleading with the man. The man seems uninterested, and by chance, the narrator catches his eye as he stares out of the window. There is a moment of communication between them. She recognises something in him, some parallel between his situation and hers - which must have to do with proximity to suffering yet detachment from it. The woman then takes the child to a research station outside of the city so that a sample can be taken to start a culture to heal her eye. Here again is the same quality of involvement in and yet detachment from pain. All the animals at the research station have patches where their fur has been shaved off for injections, and the daughter, seeing the monkeys without knowing that, is uplifted by

[7] Nadine Gordimer, Not for Publication (London: Gollancz, 1965), p.176. (All succeeding page references will be included in the text.)

the sight. When she hears why they have been shaved, she pulls back from her mother in instinctive sympathy for the animals. And then when the nurse explains about growing a culture in an egg, the child feels herself drawn into the cycle of pain - pain imposed on others by people who do not themselves feel pain. The child says, "I wish I could be the one who sits and watches." (NFP, p.179). The last incident is a story told by her husband of an acquaintance who had committed suicide. He had locked himself in the boot of his car and shot himself. The narrator recalls something that the suicide had once told her after she had commented about the cruelty of a practice he had of shutting his dogs in the boot of his car. " ... it wasn't cruel ... they didn't mind being shut up in there ..." (NFP, p.180). Once again the narrator feels she is the observer of somebody else's pain, but that this time, there might be a message in the last action of the man, shutting himself in the boot of his car.

"Message in a Bottle" marks such a departure from Gordimer's customary structures that it should be called experimental short fiction rather than a modern story. The difficulty that some people have had in understanding the story is mirrored in this comment from Kevin Margerey:

> The story remains one of those of which, for me, the interpretation is uncertain. Certainly, though, the image the story creates is in its own strange way, beautiful: pregnant, precise, and very nearly if not quite transparent. [8]

[8] Kevin Magarey, "Cutting the Jewel: Facets of Art in Nadine Gordimer's Short Stories," Southern Review (Adelaide), 7 (1974), p.17.

It seems also that Gordimer herself was conscious of this difficulty, and so gave a part-explanation in a passage towards the end of the story.

> What can I do with it? It's like a message picked up on the beach, that may be a joke, a hoax or a genuine call of distress - one can't tell, and ends up by throwing the bottle back into the sea. (NFP, p.180)

There are a number of calls of distress - from the girl in the coffee-shop, from the daughter, and from the man in the boot of his car. In each case, the message is not received, or, if received, cannot be acted on. The old man sits stonily, ignoring the pain in the girl's story. Similarly, the girl at the ending laughs at the old man's age-related sicknesses. The mother feels herself unable to console her daughter any further than she is already doing, and the man was beyond help when he climbed into the boot. This last image is also a powerful common image. Everybody is shut in, enclosed by his or her pain. The girl and the old man are separate and apart from each other. The animals at the Research station are literally encaged, or else their freedom of movement is restricted. Out of all this emerges the response that is most commonly made to situations like these - our inability, or else our unwillingness to respond adequately to a call for help. Through our indifference, selfishness or inadequacy, we shut others up in their lonelinesses and despairs.

The story is thus not totally beyond comprehension. It is clearly about the difficulties of communication between people - particularly between people suffering and people not suffering. The ending shows us the child's awareness of her complicity in the process of pain - she is horrified by the thought of the egg

into which her tissue was placed, developing into a chicken lest the chicken be drawn into the cycle of suffering. But the most important point is this. The narrator reveals these incidents in consonant self-narration - i.e. she uses the present tense and relates the sequence of events as they happen. The result of this is an immediacy with the narrator's consciousness, and a closeness to the events being described. The story is as much about the act of perception as it is about the objects or incidents being perceived. We have to see this story through different glasses from those that we have been wearing up till now. It would be misleading to attempt to understand the story by way of trying to understand the reference of each 'thing' in the story. This is why the story is so different from the others that Gordimer had written before this.

The two interior monologues are also of a different nature from the bulk of Gordimer's preceding work. Most of her stories have a very established authorial presence - and in most of these stories, that presence is manifested by a third person narrative situation. In early stories, the narrator was pronouncedly 'Gordimerian', but her general movement has been away from that - into a number of directions. She has rendered the tone and presence of the narrator more and more neutral, and her increasing use of irony has resulted in a less dominant narrative presence. The use of figural narration becomes more considered (cf. the story called "Horn of Plenty" from Six Feet of the Country). The move to interior monologue would seem to be a logical extension of this technical shift in point of narration - a shift introduced for largely thematic, but also ideological

grounds.[9] The basic change from narrative to monologue concerns the position of the speaking voice, and the relationship of that voice with the relative incidents and reflections on them. Narration implies autonomy of what is being narrated, monologue the identity of the articulation and the experience being articulated.

Of the two monologues, "Some Monday For Sure" is less fully realised. The story is, in fact, in two parts - the first mainly narrative, dealing with the events which precipitated the exile of the narrator, his sister, and her husband. The second half is consistently interior monologue dealing with their conditions in exile, and their loneliness, and the sense of loss that exile entails. The past tense is used for the narration of events, but present tense for the monologue itself. Any comments made from the vantage point of exile - i.e. comments on the events of the truck hi-jacking are made in the present tense, and so it is that present tense repetition which binds the two parts structurally.

> I knew it must be a Monday. I notice that women quite often don't remember ordinary things like this, I don't know what they think about - for instance, Emma didn't catch on that it must be Monday, next Monday, or the one after, some Monday for sure, because Monday was the day that we knew Josias went with the truck to the Free State Mines. (NFP, p.197)

The present tense comments remind us that this patch of narration in fact is occurring inside the memory of the speaker - an articulation of events of the past inside a monologue of his

[9] Michael King, "Race and History in the Stories of Nadine Gordimer" Africa Insight, 13, No. 3 (1983), p.224.

thoughts and reflections of his present, which is the situation of exile. The effect of this particular mode of presentation is that those sections of the story which are totally interior monologue, i.e. stream of consciousness, allow for the immediate presentation of the workings of the consciousness of the speaker. The pain and loneliness of exile is revealed not in words such as 'pain' or 'exile', but in the thoughts and preoccupations as expressed in:

> ... I mean I can always talk to anyone I feel like it but she hasn't learnt more than ahsante - she could've picked it up just as easily, but she can't, if you know what I mean. It's just a noise to her, like dogs barking ... (NFP, p.207)

or

> I walk and walk, along the bay, past the shops and hotels, and the German church and the big bank, and through the mud streets between old shacks and stalls. It's dark there and full of other walking shapes as I go past light coming from the cracks in the walls, where the people are in their homes. (NFP, p.208)

The other interior monologue is "Good Climate, Friendly Inhabitants". In this story, the reflections and thoughts are continuously juxtaposed with the segments of narrative, so that the effect is of an internalised pondering over a particular incident, rather than a structured account of it to somebody else, even if that somebody else is only an implied listener. Because of the particular juxtaposition of action and thought - at least vocalised thought, it is possible to see situations in which the actions and the thoughts behind them contradict the thoughts as expressed by the speaker. The reader is then forced to realise that the narrative is from an unreliable narrator, who

is tied by his prejudices into a certain pattern of perception. This situation of unreliable narration almost invariably gives rise to ironic presentation within the story, and, as has already been pointed out, irony is an element in narrative technique that Gordimer acknowledges as being more and more used in her writing.[10] Illustrating how the unreliability of the narrator and irony are linked in "Good Climate, Friendly Inhabitants", involves a brief analysis of the character of the speaker, and her relationship with Jack, the chief petrol attendant. She calls him Jack because, as a result of her internalised racist attitudes, she doesn't consider his actual name, Mpanza Makiwane, as a name at all. This is a negation of his identity, just as the word 'boss-boy' is a negation of his manhood. However, she betrays an inconsistency between her prejudices and her actions especially towards Mpanza, allowing him not to have to call her 'missus', the outward form of 'respect'; buying drink for him; confiding her secret (about the young mercenary), allowing Mpanza to offer her advice on how to conduct her life. When the extent of her unreliability as a narrator is realised, then the extent of irony in the story is apparent. The constant switching from past tense to present tense requires the reader to be alert to the possibility of irony throughout. Her delicate allusions to status symbols at the start do not disguise the fact of her economic situation of dependency, her social standing and its precarious bourgeoise sensibilities, and her vulnerability that

[10] cf. p.101 and especially footnote 6.

allows her to be exploited by the young mercenary so easily.

The other story which is noteworthy from a structural point of view is "One Whole Year, And Even More", where again the narrator seems to be unreliable. As the basic mode is narrative, there is less comment offered and hence access to the unreliability is restricted. However, the same situation applies - the comments of the narrator could be belied by the actions he himself chooses to narrate. The story centres on Mr Stevens, and his relationships with his wife and the German au pair girl that they employ one summer. Mr Stevens is half-German; his father was English; his mother, who died in the Holocaust, German. The au pair girl is often described in physical terms, setting up the clear understanding that the narrator was physically conscious of her femininity. For short stretches of the summer, the narrator and the au pair girl live alone in London, while the wife and children occupy a holiday cottage at the sea. Four months after this, the girl has a miscarriage, and refuses to name the father, because she wants to protect his reputation. What seems to be deliberately left unresolved (by the narrator himself) is whether or not the narrator was the father. The key passage is, "If she hadn't been German, it might have been me. It would have been me. Nothing stood between me and Renate's body but a simple prejudice, the smoke from the pyre of my mother's innocent body ..." (NFP, p.99). The ending, always significant in Gordimer's stories in some degrees as a pointer towards the central theme, leaves the issue open. "I came home from town at lunchtime the next day and said, 'Renate get away all right?' but I didn't need to ask, the moment I walked into the house I could feel that she

was gone." (NFP, p.103).

In these analyses, I have attempted nothing more than to indicate the structural features of those stories that merit attention. With the exception of "Message in a Bottle", their thematic aspects will be fully dealt with later on. The point made earlier is that this collection of stories shows considerable changes in emphasis from the previous collections. This change deals with what had been the self-directed concept of the artist as revealed by the stories. Gordimer's role as a short story writer changes from the self-conscious, self-delighting artist or craftsperson of, for instance, The Soft Voice of The Serpent, to an artist whose commitment in social-cultural concerns becomes more and more apparent. What makes this collection so important is the treatment of themes, and what the emphases she employs reveal about her stance as artist. The movement is from ideological neutrality (of the liberal stance) to commitment in political and cultural terms. In the stories themselves, attention to formal or structural innovations seems to be neglected except in the case of the two features already mentioned, the interior monologues and the unreliable narrator. It is also not surprising that her next novel The Late Bourgeois World, should have a narrative structure that includes both of these elements, nor that, with the possible exception of A Guest of Honour, all her succeeding novels have significant innovations in narrative technique. It is almost as if this collection is the turning point - that from this point onwards, Gordimer devotes much more of her attention to the novels, and the larger scope made

possible by novels. Since this collection (1965), she has had five novels published, and only three collections of short stories. Before 1965, she had had three novels and three collections of short stories. It is necessary to try to suggest some reasons why this should have happened. It would seem that the scope of individual short stories is now too small for the kind of analysis that Gordimer starts concerning herself with. In terms of what she had to say about South African realities, the short story was no longer an adequate vehicle for her thought.

It is her role as a social commentator, committed to a radical change in white attitudes, and in the power structures of South African society, that now becomes predominant. The change in emphasis in these stories is only a result of changes in her understanding of South African political, social and economic conditions. This change must be largely attributable to the violence and repression of the years covered by this collection. However, it was clearly being formed even before that time.

Even in the late fifties, "the pressure of the South African political climate on her work had been Gordimer's dominant concern."[11] Not only was she forced to move from the private domain to the public in her fiction, especially that fiction dealing with race, but her understanding of that political arena changed considerably. "In a new African era, the basis of

[11] John Cooke, "African Landscapes: the World of Nadine Gordimer," World Literature Today, 52 (1978), p.534.

Gordimer's commitment switched from a belief in the power of relationships across the colourbar to effect change to an identification with a coming Africa-controlled society, growing from our African history and nurtured by African thought."[12] This is particularly true of those stories that deal with race. In her earlier stories, the attitudes and actions of white liberalism had been examined and had been found wanting: William Chadders in "Something for the Time Being"; Jennifer Tetzel in "Which New Era Would That Be?"; even to a certain extent, Joyce McCoy in "The Smell of Death and Flowers", are not presented as effectively providing a solution to the problems they face.

The direction that Gordimer takes starts becoming evident in her fiction in the sixties. But before this, she had started to formulate her new vision. In an essay entitled, "Where Do Whites Fit In?", published in 1959,[13] her answer was that unless Whites saw themselves as Africans first and as white second, and unless Whites were prepared to contribute whatever they could, not in a paternalistic or Eurocentric way, but fitting in where they could in accordance with patterns established by blacks, there would be nowhere for them to fit in. Coupled with this is a change in her ideas of establishing a national literature for South Africa. With most black writers silenced, either by banning or by exile, she turns her attention to Africa as a whole, and starts reading and responding to Africa on a very different basis. John Cooke

12 Cooke, p.535.

13 Nadine Gordimer, "Where Do Whites Fit In?" The Twentieth Century, 165 (April 1959), pp.326-331.

reveals the process by which this occurs, revealing her interest in and study of Fanon and Césaire, who "had reformulated the colonial experience in a black perspective".[14] It is not surprising that her first book of criticism, The Black Interpreters,[15] deals with African writers.

The effect that this shift has in her own fiction becomes increasingly apparent in the treatment of themes in Not For Publication. This is apparent not only in quantity (ten of the fifteen stories deal with race and exile) but also in the specific approach that she adopts. Not only does she write stories that attempt to portray the working of a black consciousness, but she also writes stories that deal exclusively with black experience.

As a result of this shift, the terms and methods used to analyse the earlier stories are not fully suited to these later stories. She had worked in one tradition to start with, and she changes from it. The critical approach so far adopted has been the critical response that that early paradigm had required. With Gordimer's shift in ideology, and a corresponding shift in her literary theories, there should also come a shift in the critical approach and apparatus to deal with it. The early stories are self-contained units which did not rely on their context for their impact. Hence, the method of close textual analysis revealed the story and its meaning adequately. In this

14 Cooke, p.536.

15 Nadine Gordimer, The Black Interpreters (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1973).

collection, this method of close textual analysis becomes less satisfactory. What is being said in the story is as much the result of what is outside the story as inside, hence close textual analysis alone will not adequately reveal it. This is why it has been necessary to introduce this chapter with such an extended introduction to South African history of the period when the stories were being written. This is not to argue that other critical approaches would not, within their own paradigms, also reveal significant insights about the stories. The approach that was initially suitable becomes insufficient to deal thoroughly with the changes that become apparent in Gordimer's writing.

The first thematically linked group of stories that I will deal with will be that concerned with race. This theme has been a fairly regular concern in Gordimer's stories, but it has, as has been pointed out in the earlier chapters, undergone certain changes. At first the differences of race were seen as a barrier against understanding and communication, and the perspective used was invariably the white point of view (e.g. "Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?", "The Amateurs"). This approach changes and the point of view of whites becomes treated far less sympathetically than before. The hypocrisies and inadequacies of the liberal approach to race are pointed out, and what is being revealed is that there is indeed a barrier, but it is inside the consciousness of people affected by the mentality of apartheid. By the time the stories of Not For Publication were written, Gordimer felt, as indicated above, that whites had to learn to accommodate themselves to blacks rather than the other way round. This entailed, as a primary stage of such an accommodation,

seeing black people on their terms of reference, rather than on Eurocentric terms. The way Gordimer translates that into her fiction is to present stories with black consciousness being examined, black understandings of reality - in order to require her white readers to make that exploration as well.

The title story "Not For Publication" starts with a sentence that indicates that the story is meant to be understood as being written in some future time when the Prime Minister of South Africa is a black man. The intended effect is to shift the centre of the story from a white to a black perspective, hence when whites are introduced, they are meant to be seen as different, 'non-official', in the way that blacks are seen in the apartheid of the sixties.[16] The story itself is concerned with the efforts of Adelaide Graham-Grigg to 'westernise' a street urchin, Praise Basetse, whom she had found in Johannesburg. She takes him with her back to the village where she was working, the place where the boy's grandfather had come from. Because he responds well, by learning to read and write, by adapting to western education, he is sent back to Johannesburg to be able to go to a high school run by priests. Because he continues to do well there, he is pressured into writing his matric a year early. As a result of the pressure which he himself accepts in his effort to succeed, he cracks. Just before he was due to start writing his exams, he runs away from school and disappears. This

[16] However, this is not consistently done. If the words, "the white woman" were to have been included before "Adelaide Graham-Grigg", the effect would have been enhanced.

had been pre-figured when, under strain to understand some maths, Praise had thought that Father Audry's comforting hand was raised against him in anger, and he had called the priest 'Sir' - a sudden reversion to his street urchin mentality. "It was clearly hysteria: he had never addressed Father Audry as anything but 'Father'. It was some frightening retrogression and reversion to the subconscious, a place of symbols and collective memory." (NFP, p.19).

As indicated earlier, time will not be spent on showing how these stories are structured. The patterns are similar, and by now easily recognisable. What does need explanation in detail is the treatment of subject matter. "Not For Publication" is a condemnation of those well-meaning whites who in the pursuit of 'good works' trample on the intrinsic qualities and characteristics of the people they are trying to help. The target in this story is that group of expatriate philanthropists and missionaries who saw their task as the westernising of a black élite to fill leadership positions in such a way as to produce a westernised Africa. The school is probably based on St Peters, Rosettenville, a school that educated a large number of future black leaders. The role of the missionary in the conquest of Southern Africa, as a fifth column of the conquerers, has been the subject of a number of studies.[17] The point that this story makes is that the civilising mission inspired even by the highest of motives, ignores and tramples on features of the indigenous

[17] e.g. Nosipho Majeke, The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest (Johannesburg: Society of Young Africa, 1953), or cf. The South African Outlook 117 (1983), p.104.

culture in a destructive way. Praise is sent off to school in Johannesburg and so loses the chance to participate in the tribal initiation school. Gordimer tries to show Praise's affinity with his 'tribal context' by using the imagery of the boy's black surroundings to describe features of the white world. "The woman's kindness, the man's attention, got him in the eyes like the sun striking off the pan where the cattle were taken to drink." (NFP, p.14). Gordimer makes it quite clear through the opinion of Adelaide Graham-Grigg that the missionary schools played a complex and controversial role in the colonial process. The missionary school was "a place where at least, along with the pious pap, a black child could get an education as good as a white child's." (NFP, p.10), or "That was one of the things she held against the missionaries: how they stressed Christ's submission to humiliation and so had conditioned the people of Africa to humiliation by the white man" (NFP, p.9). Typically though, Gordimer does not present a totally one-sided picture - the presentation of Father Audry is in part sympathetic, and his concern for the boy, even if misguided, is genuine.

"The African Magician" again forces the reader into confronting an aspect of black Africa rather than white Africa as the central component of the story. The setting of the story is a boat trip up the Congo River, during which the white passengers are given an entertainment by a black magician. The first part of his performance consists of traditional western magic tricks, and is carried out with none of the conventional patter or gestures or expressions that make up a part of the performance.

At its conclusion, the whites feel that they have not been given a proper show, so the magician is asked to do something else. The magician then hypnotises his assistant, but this too does not satisfy the white audience; they want one of their own number to be hypnotised. Without hesitation, without inviting anyone, nor with anyone volunteering, the magician hypnotises a young recently married white woman in the audience. She walks up to the magician and makes a gesture of submission to him. This infuriates the white men, that he should have chosen a white woman, and one of the men shouts out his protest. At this, the magician instantly releases his subject from hypnosis. She is the only person at ease - and her comment is "It's Wonderful." That is the end of the magician's entertainment on board, and the narrator reveals in the ending that she at least has some understanding of what had occurred in that second half of the magician's show.

> He looked like any young black clerk, with his white shirt and grey trousers, and the attaché case. All Africa carries an attaché case now; and what I knew was in that one might not be more extraordinary than what might be in some of the others. (NFP, p.128)

The story is again one which presents the interaction of white and black, but again the centre of interest in the story is now with the black, rather than with the whites. The bulk of the story is seen from the point of view of the whites, and their responses are fully detailed. In that, the story is superficially similar to earlier white-oriented stories. However, this story depends entirely on the figure of the magician, a black man whose performance as a magician is only

convincing when he operates his 'African magic'. The narrator and her husband pay one hundred and fifty francs to see the show. They stay, in order not to patronise the black man by expecting a lesser standard of expectation than they would have from a white magician. "If they (the blacks) chose, as they had, to enter into activity governed by Western values, whether it was conjuring or running a twentieth century state, they must be done the justice of being expected to fulfil their chosen standards." (NFP, p.124). This is a sophisticated attitude, different from most of those held by the other whites, but it is also an attitude that would not have been expressed in an earlier Gordimer story. When the magician is persuaded to extend his show, he uses African standards and African magic, and he is a very different performer. "As a hypnotist, the magician had a sense of timing that he lacked so conspicuously when performing tricks ..." (NFP, p.125). His success as an African magician is so conspicuous after his comparative failure as a 'western' magician that the reader is forced to recognise the larger metaphor involved. From that point onwards, the implied didacticism of the parallels in the story becomes readily apparent. That he chooses to exercise his magic on a white woman (the weak point of white macho is the sexist protectiveness for white women against black man) is a sign of his confidence in his own powers. What the magician shows is that he can exercise a power greater than anything the whites could muster. This is the comment that the narrator makes on the gesture of submission that the hypnotised white woman had made:

> There was a peace of absolute trust in it. It stirred a needle of fear in me - more than that, for a moment I was horribly afraid: and how can I explain that, either. For it was beautiful, and I had lived in Africa all my life, and I know them, us, the white people. To see it was beautiful would make us dangerous. (NFP, p.127)

What would make them dangerous is that blacks should exercise such power over whites, and yet have it seen as something beautiful. It is also a statement that the practice of apartheid denies.

"Through Time and Distance" is less innovative in its approach. Set against the background of black agitation against passes, it deals with the relationship between Hirsh, a salesman in clothing, and his driver, Phillip. After a detailed introduction which delineates the relationship, the central action of the story starts with a week long trip into the country. When they return, late on the Friday, they encounter a group of the city blacks who are out on strike. The car is stopped, and Phillip and Hirsh are pulled out. Phillip claims to have burnt his pass, but when they jostle him, it falls out of his pocket. He leaps back into the car, and drives off, leaving Hirsh behind, with the crowd running "beside him and around him". The ending is inconclusive - "Their mouths were wide, and he did not know for whom they were clamouring - himself or the boy." (NFP, p.57).

Where this story does represent an advance is in the nature

of the master-servant relationship.[18] Previous stories had not dwelt on the interdependency of such relationships.[19] What was presented was either stereotyping or dependency situations, but in this story, Phillip and Hirsh almost parallel each other - one in the context of the whites; the other in the context of the blacks. This is not to suggest that either Hirsh or the narrator seems to regard them as equals - the narrator often refers to Phillip as a 'boy'. But he does not do it consistently. Sometimes he does call Phillip a 'young man', and other blacks are referred to as 'men' (pp.52,53,57). It is only when the narrator is presenting the narrative directly from Hirsh's point of view that he uses the derogatory wording, as if to suggest that this is what Hirsh himself would have said. "In spite of his city clothes and his signet ring and all, the boy was exactly as simple as they (the people in the 'reserves') were, underneath." (NFP, p.51). This is not to say that the narrator is unreliable - i.e. that there is a conflict between the narrator's voice, and what we know Gordimer's voice to be, because the narrator is not speaking in her voice at those moments, but rather is aping the thoughts and attitudes of Hirsh in order to project Hirsh's point of view.

Despite this paralleling though, the story is more about Phillip than about Hirsh. His point of view is more frequently

18 The key stories on this theme are: "The Bridegroom", "Horn of Plenty", "Six Feet of the Country", "Happy Event", "Ah, Woe is Me", and "Monday is Better than Sunday".

19 With the possible exception of "The Bridegroom", where the white man is more dependent on the black man than vice versa.

used than Hirsh's, and the climax of the story has Phillip as the central actor. Even though Hirsh is the actor in the ending, the ending itself is left ambiguous. If the answer to the question posed in the ending, i.e. 'Who were they clamouring for?', is the "boy", then Hirsh's position is one of irrelevance. Gordimer had already suggested in her article "Where Do Whites Fit In?", mentioned above, that whites who were not prepared to consider themselves Africans first, did not have a place in South Africa; this story seems to say the same thing.

The questions of interior monologue and the unreliable narrator in "Good Climate, Friendly Inhabitants" have already been discussed. The central relationship of the story is again a master-servant relationship, again one of interdependence. His dependence is the result of his being economically exploited; hers the more human need for company and a confidante. The texture of the story is a result of the irony of the unreliable narrator - she betrays herself every time she expresses an opinion. The substance of the story line is that a young white mercenary buys petrol from the garage where the narrator works, and she helps him find accommodation. He manages to take advantage of her, and eventually moves in with her. Then he disappears and it is only through the intervention of Jack the chief petrol attendant to whom the narrator had explained the situation, that she is finally rid of him. The mercenary returns to the petrol station one afternoon when the narrator is off-duty, and Jack explains to the mercenary that she has gone to live in Rhodesia with her daughter.

It is a story of many strands. What passes for 'friendship' or even 'love' in the story is the crudely manipulative exploitation of a lonely ageing single white woman by an unscrupulous young white man - and the helplessness of her position. It is also a story about loneliness, made all the more lonely by the 'brave' attempt she makes to show that she is coping. "That's the trouble when you work alone in an office like I do, you don't make friends at your work." (NFP, p.147). One of the reasons why she is lonely is the set of barriers she erects around herself. She sees people in terms of stereotypes. The white mechanics are dismissed as a 'bunch of ducktails' (NFP, p.146); the blacks are considered variously as 'lazy', 'cheeky bastards', 'children'. She doesn't seem to have proper strategies for dealing with people. She allows herself to be manipulated by the white mercenary, even though she sees through him. "Oh, he was nice to me then, I can tell you; he could be nice if he wanted to, it was like a trick that he could do." (NFP, p.155), but she gains nothing from the interaction. After they have slept together for the first time, she says, "I know nobody would believe me, they would think I was just trying to make excuses for myself, but in the morning everything seemed just the same, I didn't feel I knew him any better." (NFP, p.153). She works out that he is dishonest (about his age) yet she gives him money, allows him to stay with her. In the end she is frightened of him, but is not able to get rid of him. The image of herself locked up in her flat, scared to go out, buying chains to keep the door safe, is a vivid outer sign of her psychological state.

The other important set of relationships in her life is with the blacks at the service station. She calls them 'boys' - the typical perjorative term applied to fully grown black men. When the chief Petrol Attendant, whose name was Mpanza Makiwane explains why telephone callers for him ask for Mpanza, and not 'Jack', the 'white' name by which he is called at the petrol station, he says, "Here I'm Jack because Mpanza Makiwane is not a name, and there I'm Mpanza Makiwane because Jack is not a name

p.147). She feels it necessary to 'keep them in their place' by spiteful little manoeuvres; "just to show him [Jack] that he mustn't get too free with a white person." Yet despite this attitude, her actions belie the distance the attitude presupposes. She says things like, "I'd sooner talk to the blacks [than to the mechanics], that's the truth, though I know it sounds a strange thing to say" and "But you get more sense out of the boss-boy Jack, than you can out of some whites." (NFP, p.147). Then, later on, she tells Jack about the man not paying his hotel bill, and then again, she tells Jack that if she ever doesn't turn up for work, he must get someone in the workshop to go to her flat. She was getting nervous about what the young mercenary might do to her. She was in other words turning to the one person she felt she could trust in this situation, to support her. It was only her apartheid mentality that prevented whatever bond of understanding there was between them developing into friendship. She remains locked within her prejudices. Even after Jack has solved the problem for her, she still ends the story trapped within her restricted frame of mind. "It just

shows you, a woman on her own has always got to look out; it's not only that it's not safe to walk about alone at night because of the natives, the whole town is full of people you can't trust." (NFP, p.158).

The importance of the next story, "A Chip of Glass Ruby" is that it is set entirely within the black context. This is the logical extension of Gordimer's concern to come to terms, in fiction at least, with the black experience of living in South Africa. The central figure is Mr Bamjee, a fruit and vegetable hawker, who is more or less non-political in his life-style. Married to him is Zanip Bamjee, a widow, and a political organiser fighting for black rights. Bamjee does not understand his wife, nor her political involvement. He resents the intrusion of the duplicating machine into his dining room as metaphoric of the intrusion of politics into his life. However, he did find something undeniably attractive in Mrs Bamjee, and it was not that she was physically beautiful. Mrs Bamjee is presented as a vital person, committed to an idea and a struggle, yet still actively involved in her own family's life as well. Bamjee is flattered that important people visit her, because it is an indication of her significance in public affairs. But what is more significant about Mrs Bamjee is that she has co-ordinated within herself the public and private domains, and her life represents an integration of them. She churns out leaflets for the resistance campaign "as if she might have been pounding chillies." (NFP, p.105). His discussion of the campaign is juxtaposed immediately with her concern for a dress for one of

her daughters to attend an engagement party. When Dr Khan, one of her political associates is arrested, she gets home and makes her daughter the dress. When she is arrested, Bamjee is angry with her because he is not sure that he will cope with the children, but just before the police take her away, her last words to Bamjee are about the importance of the children attending the engagement party. When she is in prison, Bamjee does not get in touch with her (the children do) and he spends his time lamenting his situation. But the children recognise what their mother stands for. Even when one of the children is singled out for attack at school by a coloured teacher, the oldest boy explains why the coloured man resents what an Indian woman was doing for black people. This explanation is aimed not at the child but at Bamjee. The ending provides the final stage of the pattern. Mrs Bamjee asks her eldest daughter to be sure to wish Bamjee a happy birthday, which she does. Bamjee had forgotten it was his birthday, and he can't understand why she remembers, especially in prison. The girl, very pregnant, points out that her mother never wants anyone to be left out - she remembers, and wants the life of everyone to be filled out. When Bamjee complains that that is indeed the matter with her, he realises too that that life, that vitality in the sense of life-force, is what it was that had attracted him in the first place. She had life within her, for everybody. The ending seems to underscore this. "He knew why he had desired her, the ugly widow with five children: he knew what way it was in which she was not like the others: it was there, like the face of the [pregnant] belly that lay between him and his daughter." (NFP, p.113).

"Some Monday For Sure", like "A Chip of Glass Ruby", is a story solely concerned with black consciousness. Thus it continues the points made in this regard in the previous story, but it goes considerably further in that it deals not only with the theme of race, but it introduces the theme of exile as well. Before considering the story, it is necessary to outline a number of points regarding exile. Firstly, Gordimer herself has chosen to remain in South Africa, so her treatment of the theme will differ from that adopted by a person actually in exile. Secondly, at the time of this collection (1960-1965), a large number of her friends, literary and social were going into exile, or had already gone. Es'kia Mphahlele had left in 1957, Lewis Nkosi and Todd Matshikiza 1960, Can Themba 1963, Nat Nakasa 1964.[20] Her approach to the theme is not specific to South African exile. Her stories deal with the larger issue - which in the final analysis is that exile is an extreme form of physical, spiritual, social and mental alienation of a person from his or her base. This larger issue of necessity entails that the characters in her stories function both as individual characters, realised fully in their particular circumstances, and as representatives of the general aspects of the conditions of exile, and of what had driven people into exile.

"Some Monday For Sure", the other interior monologue, is in one sense a broken story. As explained earlier, it is both

[20] See also her comments in Clingman, p.176.

narrative and monologue, and the story's halves are held together by a thin link of present tense signals that place the narrative 'within' the monologue. The story is further broken by its division into cause and effect. The narrative tells of an incident when a dynamite truck is hi-jacked, the failure of which forces the hi-jackers to flee to Bechuanaland (Botswana). The monologue is his reflections, now that he is located in the poorer section of Dar-Es-Salaam. Despite this technical weakness, the story is a significant one in Gordimer's canon. Her attempt to capture and reveal the consciousness of a black man, firstly engaged in an act of violence and secondly suffering in exile, marks the distance which Gordimer had moved since the thematic concerns of the first 'pre-liberal' stories.

The presentation of exile is the high point of the story. The narrator's state of mind is rendered implicitly - his feelings of difference between himself and his new surroundings - differences of language, customs, standards of efficiency, general ways of doing things. Even though the narrator, his sister and her husband left South Africa because of the conditions there, they do not find themselves able to feel comfortable in their new surroundings. Even though they left because of actions hostile to the state, this did not automatically gain them entrée to their new world. They find even in the new world outside South Africa that they are separated from each other. Josias has been sent away for training and the narrator too will be sent in the future, sometime - in other words, the process of disruption continues. There is a pointlessness to their existence. "In the meantime, I

go to work and I walk about the place in the evenings ..." (NFP, p.207). He concludes, "I suppose she wants to be back there now. But still she wouldn't be the same. I don't often get the feeling she knows what I'm thinking about, any more, or that I know what she's thinking... " (NFP, p.207). It can be seen that this story contains a thorough analysis of the events of exile on people - in terms of loneliness, alienation from home, and from friends, alienation even within the exile community, a paradoxical longing to return home even to conditions which precipitated the exile in the first place, a lack of incentive to make the place of exile home.

"The Pet" also combines the themes of race and exile. The story is about Gradwell, a Nyasa man who is a house-servant of a white couple. The constraints on his freedom, the forced dependency situation he suffers, the actual restrictions of his freedom of movement (because he is an illegal immigrant), the restricted quality of his life are the result of his status as an illegal immigrant, and a black man in South Africa. In that he is earning money, and living a reasonably stable life, he is better off where he is than in his actual home in Nyasaland. But in South Africa, he is in exile. Initially, he sought out the company of other exiles because he felt lost; then he went to them out of habit. The customs of Nyasaland are not allowed; the company of his wife and children is not allowed, and this loneliness is presented by Gordimer in paradoxically muted terms. Despite all this, and despite his exile, he is content with his situation.

The story's organic structure is an allegory. The Morgans buy a bulldog puppy, ostensibly the Pet of the title. Mrs Morgan's intention for the dog is that he will grow up to be "a handsome, dignified, well-behaved, clean bully boy. And to those wicked burglars - murder." (NFP, p.81) However, the dog turns out to be a messy unco-ordinated beast - with all the external attributes of strength, but with something broken inside. He seems ashamed of himself, "his power appalled him", he never learns obedience, and he is a pathetic failure as a watchdog. In other words, in what he was supposed to be essentially, he was not. The bulldog's situation parallels Gradwell's - he is a man who is denied all the qualities and features of manhood. He lives alone, separated from his wife, with no child, alienated from his native Nyasaland, distanced from his friends because of their subordinate role as servants, deprived of their freedoms. The ending of the story which is presented by a third person narrator in the regular Gordimerian tone of neutral muted irony, brings the two halves of the story together. After the bulldog has ignominiously failed to mate with a bitch, he is banished to the backyard (the space that Gradwell most often occupies) in disgrace. He feels his disgrace and cowers away from Gradwell. Gradwell eating his meal in the sun of the back yard, for the first time feels a sympathy for the dog. It is only a dull depression, but it is sufficient for him to appreciate the parallelling of his experience with the dog's. He tosses a scrap of food to the dog, who accepts it and eats it.

The story is successful for the implicit comment in the general constraints on blacks, and the implicit judgement of a

labour system that creates exiles out of people seeking work. Its unity and conciseness add to the impact of the allegorical parallel, and the tone of irony again produces the typical Gordimerian feel to the story.

In the earlier analysis of "One Whole Year, And Even More", the device of the unreliable narrator was concentrated on. The story outline given there will suffice - what will be dealt with now will be the theme of exile. Renate, the German girl is the primary exile. Living alone in a strange country, trying to learn its language, she is a voluntary exile, but she does, nevertheless, suffer a certain loss, in that everything around her is strange, foreign. When she miscarries, her reluctance to reveal the identity of the father is a part of what she has had to experience. Because her year abroad was only a temporary visit, she was not able to develop the natural relationships that would develop around the situation of her pregnancy. But it should also be recognised that both Mr Stephens and Sheila could be regarded as exiles as well. Mr Stephens had left the country of his birth because of the Nazis, and Sheila had left South Africa because of the racial prejudices of apartheid.

When the narrator describes the two women, he does so in such a way as to suggest his attraction towards Renate is greater than that which he feels towards his wife. Renate's voluptuous 'sluttishness' is dwelt on, as are features of her skin, her breasts, her too tight clothes; whereas Sheila is described in very neutral, even sexless terms; "down-to-earth ... my darling Sheila, procreator and friend." What does this suggest?

Certainly his feelings towards Germany are prejudiced. He dislikes Germany because of the Nazis. Yet this prejudice runs counter to the 'rational' approach to life that he adopts most of the time - as symbolised by the words he uses to describe his marriage - and so he represses his feelings for Germany. Renate could be regarded as Germany unaffected by the Nazis, yet obviously adapted to their having been in power. She sings the pre-Nazi song of the title, even though her mother, who taught her the song, would have taken 'the nazi soldier or SS man' as a lover. Then his repressed feelings for Germany, symbolised by the repressed sexual attraction he feels for Renate, is an indication of the effect of exile. In other words, the ending which reveals the depth of the special feeling he has for Renate is an implied comment on the alienation from his country. In the contrast between the two women, a further strand of the theme is developed. Renate, for Germany, is alive, vital, sensuous yet untouchable; Sheila, his wife (as life in exile) is seen in sexless, lifeless terms. "It is true ... that although she and Sheila used the same chemical oil to make themselves brown, the girl's tan was alive, like the colour of a plant in full sap, while Sheila's was a dark, leathery polish on her wrists and cheekbone ..." (NFP, p.92).

"Son-in-Law" is a story of exile set in Europe shortly after the war. The son-in-law of the title is a German Jew who had been given refuge by a family during the war. After the necessity for hiding him had passed, the daughter of the family and the Jew, Werner, had developed a relationship of sorts, which finally led to their getting married. The story occurs after the

death of the mother, and the father's retirement on health grounds. Werner remains unemployed, although continuing the pretence of a 'job in the city' assumed in order to satisfy the mother and to allow the wedding. The routine of an average day is described in some detail, giving the family background. The story becomes specific when Werner returns to find the old man deeply unconscious. When the old man dies the following day, the pattern of the relationship between Werner and Anne-Marie is destabilised. In the ending, she asks when he will be going out - implying the continuation of the pattern, or else a start to a genuine attempt to secure employment. He on the other hand had already begun anticipating the pleasure of staying at home. The story raises a number of aspects of the theme of exile. It presents in one instance the extreme debilitating effects of exile in the position of total dependency that Werner occupies. Not only does he not occupy a gainful position in the family, but he has accepted his meaningless role. He is dependent on Anne-Marie for everything - food, shelter, protection, almost identity. There are suggestions that he had an existence prior to the war in which he had reasonable prospects, a job, and a wife. If his compensation claim had been upheld, he would have been comfortably off. But exile - distance from his home - had sapped him. This is given metaphoric substance by the transfer of disablement from Anne-Marie's father to Werner, the son-in-law. The old man had been physically disabled, and in the ending, the son-in-law is pleased at the prospect of taking on the position and role that the old man had occupied. Even in their being

together after the old man's death, the separation between Werner and Anne-Marie is stressed:

> ... he had the feeling that she was thinking very hard, in an unstemmable stream of words, back through the past he had not known with her, in her own language, in forms so personal, regional and idiomatic that he, with his imperfect, foreigner's grasp of it, would not have been able to understand a word even if she had been thinking aloud. (NFP, p.30)

The final story in this group, "Native Country", is an analysis of the theme through consideration of the conflicting pulls of Western European and African culture and aesthetics on the central figure, Anita. Born of exiled parents in South Africa, she grows up surrounded by the antique artefacts of the western civilisation that her parents so desperately felt the loss of. In this feeling of exile from their own tradition, they tend to disparage those who are ignorant of it, or are living components of another. Anita grows up in a dual world of the realities of Africa outside the house, and the cultural artefacts and attitudes of Europe inside the house; which include disdain for Africa's "barbarousness". She grows up absorbing the prejudices and tastes of her parents, but feeling an attraction for the vitality and spontaneity of her African surroundings. Anita's vitality is something her mother finds difficulty in accepting: she has "a certain timidity towards this apparition from activities not so much unthinkable as discounted." (NFP, p.182). When Anita is old enough to be escorted by men, she is attracted to those men who represent the two alternatives facing her - Europe and Africa. Axelrod is a friend of her father's, a man versed and knowledgeable in the antiquities that Anita's

father so deeply treasured. Anita, though, is also the object of attention of South African soldiers, clumsy, humble but eager. Anita chooses Axelrod, and in due course, goes overseas to attend a secretarial school. She becomes first his secretary, then his lover, then his wife. Despite a good life, there is a suggestion that the 'one proof' of his special love for her was never given. On his sudden death, Anita discovers that his favourable personal gem, almost his talisman, had been set into a ring and she presumes that he had had it done for her, and that this constitutes ironically the special proof of his love that she had been waiting for. However, the ring is just a bit too tight for her and she only realises that it might have been intended for someone else some months after his death. The ending is in the form of questions she puts to herself in which she raises again the issue of the choice between Africa and Europe. Ironically, just as her parents were exiles in Africa, she had become an exile in Europe, in that the artefacts and memories that were important to her were those of Africa. It was only her fascination with Axelrod and with the alexandrite that had taken her away. Throughout the story there is the comparison between the sophisticated artificiality of the western cultural artefacts, the painted faces of the women as well as the painted faces of the antique dolls; and the raw vitality and warmth of the African experience.

The next area in which a noticeable change occurs in the treatment of a theme already well established, is that of growth experiences of children. The significant change is that for the

first time in her presentation of children growing up, Gordimer presents incidents which are overtly sexual in nature, as the cause of the maturing crisis. In a more complex fashion, incidents of a sexual nature are presented which might have produced insights, but for one or another reason do not. In other words, a blending of the theme with the presentation of a façade or an illusion by which unpleasant reality is kept distanced or repressed. The two stories that treat this theme are "A Company of Laughing Faces" and "Tenants of the Last Tree House".

"A Company of Laughing Faces" was used as the illustration of the typical story pattern that Gordimer uses in this collection. The general background is drawn in quick detail: Kathy Hack is to be launched into adult life when her mother takes her off to the sea for a holiday. Kathy, naïve and slightly withdrawn, is apprehensive of the process that her mother seems so determined she should embark on, but she feels that she should go through with it. On arrival, Kathy quickly finds how easy it is to don the 'disguise' of the crowd of young people. Slowly she makes progress by swimming and dancing and getting on varying terms of acquaintance with the young people. However, it all seemed wrong.

> She longed to break through the muffle of automatism with which she carried through the motions of pleasure. There remained in her a desperate anxiety to succeed in being young, to grasp, not merely fraudulently to do, what was expected of her. (NFP, p.35-6)

When a young man starts showing a special interest in her, she accompanies him naïvely but calmly to his room. When she

realises what his intentions are, she backs out. Yet she had learnt something of passion, and it changes her from her childish innocence. "How pale and slow were the emotions engendered over years of childhood, by other people, compared to this. You lost the sea, yes, but you found this." (NFP, p.41). She leaves the room and goes to the beach where she encounters a young boy, and they share time engaging in his childish pursuits, fishing, bait-collecting, races. A few days later, the crowd goes off on a jaunt up the coast, and the little boy whom Kathy had met is separated from the crowd and is drowned. She sees him face upward in a pool of water. "What she felt was not shock, but recognition." She recognises his death as the physical metaphor of her own experience, the death of the child Kathy, the death of innocence. The explicitly sexual nature of the maturing insight is spelt out. As the young man kisses her, "she became aware of the most extraordinary sensation: her little breasts, that she had never thought of as having any sort of assertion of life of their own, were suddenly inhabited by two struggling trees of feeling, one thrusting up, uncurling, spreading, towards each nipple." (NFP, p.41). It is her recognition of the achievement of this potential in her that matures her.

The title of the other story "Tenants of the Last Tree House" prepares us for the thematic centre: the people in the story will be occupying the last moments of childhood. Again it is the emerging awareness of sexuality that effects the transition. The story centres on Cavada, growing up in a suburban setting, and her friends; the daughter of the foreign trade official, Peter who lives down the lane, and his friends

Bobby and Alex. In the introduction, the group is presented, as is the bogeyman of the area, a tramp. The introductory phase ends with the proposal by Alex of a game of 'strip' in the cellar that Peter had set up in his parents' house. The girls refuse to go down into the cellar, so the game takes place on the lawn and in the outside summerhouse. Both girls are stripped, but almost in a non-sexual way, as if the boys were aping an adult activity without knowing why. When Cavada goes to boarding school, she makes up stories about sex in the cellar. She gets into trouble about this, but is able to convince her parents that she hadn't been involved herself. The ending, the news of the murder in the cellar, frightens her totally, because she must have thought it was Alex and Peter again.

The innovatory feature in this childhood story is the emergence of sex as a real motive force in personal interactions. Cavada does not come to understand this, even though she does recognise that something had changed. The first time the 'strip' notion is realised, she takes off her petticoat, but appeals to the others, "What happens if someone comes down here and sees our petticoats?" The narrator makes the comment, "She did not understand that the rough code of childhood was suddenly torn up." when nobody responds to her appeal (NFP, p.136).

The story involves the opposition of two places, held in metaphoric contrast with each other. The treehouse is the domain of childhood, open and revealing to all. The cellar is the place that corresponds with the repressed areas of consciousness in 'adult' life. Cavada's refusal to go down into the cellar

indicates her reluctance to accept adulthood at that stage. The fact that she rushes for the treehouse reinforces it. The sexual activity takes place outside the treehouse, but not in the cellar, so it is neither childhood nor adult, and the nature of the encounter, the lack of interest once the aim of the game had been achieved, indicates the lack of seriousness of the encounter as a thing in itself. However, when she grows older, her stories about sex are located in the cellar, and the stories are fantasies. The terror she feels at the mention of murder in a cellar is the fear that fantasy and reality might have been conflated into the same thing. Just as the boys were willing to try out sex in the cellar, so too they might have been willing to try out murder. In her mind, the fantasies could become likely possibilities.

Both stories then develop Gordimer's treatment of the theme of childhood by attempting to reveal the effect of the awareness of sex in the disillusioning process of adolescence. Disillusionment; or rather the revealing and recognition of the façade of illusions is not necessarily achieved, but the explicit reference to sexual activity is a development that occurs here for the first time in the stories. Gordimer also includes in this collection a marriage story that deals with sex explicitly, and this too is a development in that theme.

"The Worst Thing Of All" is about the break-down of the marriage between Denys and Simone. The precipitating factor is the return to South Africa, and into the lives of Denys and Simone, of Denys's former lover, Sarah Mann. She is internationally renowned as a producer after having left South Africa twelve

years before in order to make her name. The story starts with her return, but then goes into a flashback which explains the relationship between Denys and Sarah, and how it ended. The traumatic loss for Denys had been relieved by the relationship he built up with Simone, and he marries her, settles into home, children and prosperity at work very happily. Sarah decides to produce Mother Courage with a black cast, and she involves Denys in his old role as adviser and confidant, and consequently he has special access to her. This results in a revival at a suppressed level, of the passion of their earlier relationship. This is never overt, but the gradual recognition of it by Simone and Denys leads to the story's ending.

The relationship between Sarah and Denys had started in their joint ventures in dramatic production, and there seemed to have developed an intense sexual tension between them. Gordimer forces this connection between their literary and dramatic activity, and the sexual relationship in a (for Gordimer) rather unsuitable image. "She meant that they mattered, she and Denys, and the poetry that flowed out of him in those days like semen." (NFP, p.60). When Sarah returns to South Africa, Denys keeps his personal distance by adopting a detached super-professionalism in their dealings with the production. But the tension is clearly there from the first time they meet again. Gordimer uses the narrative situation effectively here to build up two contrasting views of Sarah Mann. At no stage is Sarah Mann's point of view presented, nor is there any attempt to reveal the workings of her consciousness. She is always seen from someone

else's point of view, specifically, from Denys's and from Simone's. This is thematically correct, because the story is about Denys and Simone, and the effect of Sarah Mann on their relationship, from outside. Denys and Simone are presented in such a way as to reveal both Denys's unrecognised elation and excitement in the presence of Sarah Mann and his urbane mild disparagement of her to Simone. Simone's view of her is more objective and dispassionate - she notices the teeth (not perfect), and the skin (blemished). This sexual tension is made explicit in the sudden flash of memory which occurs to Denys at the cast party after the first night. He remembers very intensely a sexual encounter with Sarah Mann, and Simone sees the excitement in his demeanour. By this stage she has realised the extent to which he is still captivated by Sarah, and it alienates him from her. Her comments to him as they go home strike home very forcibly and the final paragraph is very clear.

> But when they were in bed and he wanted to make everything all right by making love to her, she turned away in tears because she no longer wanted him anymore, either. (NFP, p.77)

The last story is called "Vital Statistics". It is a rambling story about growing up, and about the illusions that Ismelda Dowd, a beauty queen and professional model, has to work through. The story is also about the exploitation and manipulation of women models, and the effect of those when the expectations of others are internalised by the women concerned. The story is also about the private and public selves that are contained in the same person. Ismelda Dowd, a poor Catholic girl at the Convent enters a small beauty competition as a joke. When

she wins it, it brings down on her head a severe talking to by the Mother Superior. But as Ismelda was leaving school anyway, it did not have much effect. She carries on with the beauty queen competitions, and does in fact become a professional model. She becomes "successful" in that she becomes well-known in the public sphere, she is paid well, she has rich men as escorts whenever she chooses, and she has all the public trappings of success. The story also reveals the failure, in her private world, to find any fulfilment, especially in relationships. She comes to realise this failure, and hence the disparity between public and private achievement. While she sees through the illusion of success into the comparative failure in her private world, her mother and family do not. They still feel she could get whatever she chooses. She, on the other hand, realises she doesn't even know what she wants, nor even what she could get. Her vision of success in private life, moulded by her family, seems to have to do with marriage. When she is trying to decide what to do on leaving school, her aunt advises her against studying to be a teacher. '" I don't know if it's worth the studying and all ... not for a nice-looking girl, you only work a few years until you get married.'" (NFP, p.162). None of the men she spends her time with even regard her as a marriageable prospect. She is trapped into a fairly rigid stereotype moulded by the expectations of others, to fulfil the wishes and desires of others - an object to be viewed, to be seen with, but never one to be human with. This pattern starts as soon as she starts becoming successful. Her school friends only take her out for

the kudos they will gain by her beauty. They don't kiss her, and they don't feel at ease with her. She internalises this attitude and this results in her being reluctant to commit herself to marriage with any one man. "Could she allow the shape of her body and the disposition of her face to be enjoyed by one man when these things were not her private possession but her stock in trade?" (NFP, p.174). She is aware of her own 'failure' on the few occasions when she indulges in affairs -

> ... what was not meant to be part of the vision was the secret panic that woke up and ran from dark to dark inside her - listening painfully, beating from within at that exterior that heard nothing, simply went on painting and combing and arranging itself. (NFP, p.173)

The stories of this collection, then, exhibit considerable changes, both in Gordimer's approach, and in her selection of thematic areas. The effects of what was happening in South Africa are reflected in the change in emphasis on the sorts of subjects she writes about, and the change in approach reflects the changes that were occurring within herself as a writer, as a result of the external changes. With her increasing commitment to a radical alternative in South Africa, the short story with its limited scope becomes ineffective as a vehicle for the analyses she wants to make. For those analyses, she turns to novels. The short stories continue, but much reduced in importance relative to her overall output.

CHAPTER SIX

LIVINGSTONE'S COMPANIONS

Livingstone's Companions reflects the change in Gordimer's outlook following the turbulent years of the early sixties. In the previous chapter, the stories of Not for Publication were seen as a direct response to the political upheavals of the years 1960 to 1965. Lewis Nkosi, writing in the sixties, describes the changes in Gordimer's perspective in the following terms.

> Gordimer has always dealt with the private relationships, the shock of self-recognition, or the awareness of the ugliness of others, but this enquiry was always conducted from the centre of a very private self, the exploration of which was Gordimer's preference to that of the public turbulence. However, as the South African situation grows progressively worse, Gordimer has moved further outward to the public area where the noise is. [1]

Gordimer herself explains the change in this way:

> The Late Bourgeois World from 1966 shows the breakdown of my belief in the liberal ideals ... This book really marks the end of what I had to say about white liberalism in South Africa, and since then I have gone further in social analysis. I think this breakdown of belief was foreshadowed already in Occasion for Loving ... [2]

In response to the changes, Gordimer moves beyond the limits of liberalism and starts investigating political, economic and

[1] Lewis Nkosi, quoted in John Cooke, "African Landscapes: The World of Nadine Gordimer" World Literature Today, 52 (1978), p.534.

[2] Johannes Riis, "Nadine Gordimer" Kunapipi, 2, No. 1 (1981), p.20.

social alternatives to what she saw developing around her in South Africa. She moves in two directions - towards Africanism,and towards radicalism.

> In a new African era the basis of Gordimer's commitment switched from a belief in the power of relationships across the colour bar to effect change to an identification with a coming African-controlled society, growing from an African history and nurtured by African thought. [3]

Stephen Clingman interprets the shift in this way:

> As the mid-sixties turned into the late sixties, the period of silence was, if anything, intensified. With the internal wings of the underground movements crushed, and those in exile in recuperation, the repressive state had never been in greater control ... It is partly in relation to this ... that the attraction for someone in Gordimer's position, of reformulating problems and possibilities on fresh ground, should be understood. [4]

This reformulation occurs in A Guest of Honour where Gordimer conducts a sophisticated analysis of the entire working of social and economic features of neo-colonialism.

> The terms [of this analysis] are clearly, and without a doubt those of the most developed and sophisticated of contemporary radical debate in the late sixties. It is not just that Fanon is quoted with emphasis in the novel on the nature of neo-colonialism, but Gordimer has obviously been reading Nkrumah, Cabral and Nyerere as well. [5]

[3] Cooke, p.535.

[4] Stephen Clingman, "History from the Inside: the Novels of Nadine Gordimer," Journal of Southern African Studies, 7, No. 2 (1980), p.184.

[5] Clingman, p.197.

The stories included in Livingstone's Companions in part reflect the shift in the perspective towards an inclusive Africanism. Five of the sixteen stories are set in African countries other than South Africa, which is a significantly higher proportion than had occurred in previous collections. These stories deal with the impact of Europeans on Africa, their role in Africa's development, and the effect Africa has had on such whites. Five other stories in Livingstone's Companions reveal the reformulation of Gordimer's analysis of South African conditions. Whereas formerly Gordimer's stories had dealt with individual confrontations with aspects of racism, the scope of these five stories in this collection is much wider, and the stories perform an analysis of the effects of the institutionalisation of apartheid into the general fabric of society. Racism is still the base, but what is being presented in the stories are the distortions and perversions resulting from the limits and curtailments of normal human interaction imposed by the apartheid laws.

The remaining stories in Livingstone's Companions seem to be 'private' rather than 'public' in their central concerns. Two of them deal with special relationships between women, a new area of concern as far as Gordimer's stories go, and the remaining stories seem unrelated to each other, or to other stories in the collection. However, one of the more significant features of these stories is the way in which the stories do not simply deal with a single theme. Instead, a number of themes interact within the stories, with one theme usually predominating. The

structures of these stories do not reveal any significant advance on the stories of the previous collection. One story, "The Credibility Gap", is experimental short fiction, but for the rest, the stories have the same approach to structure as has already been described in the previous chapter. This similarity is consistent with the point made earlier that the role of the writer has changed. The former delight in her craft, as revealed by the increasing complexity of the structures of the stories of the first three collections, becomes subordinated to the more pressing need to address herself to the social and political questions of the society around her. For the critic too, thematic concerns become more important than consideration of structural details.

"Livingstone's Companions" is, in a number of ways, the key story in this collection. Livingstone was the European explorer who 'opened up' the interior of the Continent, allowing for the subsequent appropriation and exploitation of the Continent by the industrial and capitalist states of Europe. All those who have been associated with the process of colonization - economically, territorially, politically and psychologically - are Livingstone's companions. The story makes this metaphoric transference clear. The historical companions of Livingstone are now dead and buried. The action of the story is set one hundred years after the search party was sent out to find Livingstone, and Carl Church, sent by his editor to retrace their steps, becomes a modern-day equivalent. The other people in the story are Livingstone's modern companions, and by extension, so are all the whites in the other stories who have come to Africa and have

continued the confrontation of Europe and Africa that Livingstone (and others) set up.

Carl Church is a journalist in central Africa, and he is described in A Guest of Honour as a man who "knows Africa backwards".[6] The story starts with a brief glimpse of Church in Parliament, listening to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The description of the situation sets up part of the theme.

> His (the Speaker's) clerk, with the white pompadour, velvet bow and lacy jabot that were part of the investiture of sovereignty handed down by the British, was a perfect paper-mâché blackamoor from an eighteenth-century slave trader's drawing-room.[7]

The costume, while explicable on historical and colonial grounds, is inappropriate to the setting of modern Africa. In the story's introduction, features of the contemporary political situation are alluded to: the one-party government, the OAU's internal problems, Pan-Africanism, the hostility towards the "white supremacy states south of our borders" (LC, p.4). Against this background, the action of the story starts when Church is sent by his overseas editor to retrace the path of the search party sent out to look for Livingstone, to mark its hundredth anniversary. Church is initially reluctant, and having set out, by plane and car, he decided:

> ... that all he was prepared to do was take a car, go to Moambe, take no more than two days over it, and write a piece using the journey

[6] Nadine Gordimer, A Guest of Honour (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p.337.

[7] Nadine Gordimer, Livingstone's Companions (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p.4. (All succeeding page references will be included in the text.)

> as a peg for what he did know something about - this country's attempt to achieve a form of African socialism. (LC, p.11)

What happens is that he gets lost, and ends up by chance at the hotel on the lakeside where Livingstone's companions are buried. The Lake exercises a fascination on him, and when the owner, a woman whom Church had met on the plane, arrives, Church is persuaded to stay on at the hotel for another four days, until the next plane leaves from the capital. There is a beach party on the Saturday night, during which Church learns that the owner's husband, a man of grandiose vision, had committed suicide. As Church leaves on the following day, he stops off at the graves of Livingstone's historical companions, and he finds there the grave of the suicide as well.

Included in this story is another line of narrative. Church had taken with him the Last Journal that Livingstone had written. "He had meant merely to look up a few places and easy references, but had begun to read ... (LC, p.10). Interspersed with the modern-day story are seven extracts from the Journal, which require the reader to hold the two time perspectives together. To a certain extent, Gordimer intended that the extracts should revaluate the image of Livingstone. In an interview with Stephen Gray, she said, "There is the idea that Livingstone is always presented as such a saint ..."[8] yet he is seen to be ordering beatings for his bearers, and the assessment of his responsibility for what came after him - "the horrors that have

[8] Stephen Gray, "Landmark in Fiction," Contrast, 8, No. 2 (1973), p.82.

been perpetrated in his path if not in his name - well, somehow one cannot absolve him completely."[9] The extracts are all indicated by being printed in italics; the first is introduced by "He sat in the tail of the plane, and opened the copy of Livingstone's last journals, bought that morning ..." (LC, p.9). The second extract is introduced in similar fashion, but the remaining extracts occur at irregular intervals, some with and some without introduction. The effect is of a consciousness apart from that of the narrator incorporated into the narration. It is clear enough that the extracts are from the journals - what does remain as a source of tension is the way in which they relate to the text around them. But this tension is fruitful, requiring us to remain conscious of the other dimension of the story. The two strands are linked by Church's discovery of the graves at the end of the story - linked because the graves indicate the common end of the companions, both old and new.

Arising out of this double narrative strand are three comments. First, the exploitation of Africa that followed Livingstone's exploration is underlined ironically by the two comments made by the hotel owner and her son. When Church asks her where the graves of Livingstone's companions are, she replies "carelessly unimpressed, 'My graves. On my property. Two minutes from the hotel.'" (LC, p.9). The second comment is from the son of the hotel owner, and it occurs when Church remarks on the ivory bangles on the wrist of the fisherman at the lake.

[9]Gray, p.82.

> 'D'you want one?' the young man offered. (My graves, the woman had said, on my property,) 'I'll get him to sell it to you. Take it for your wife.' (LC, p.19)

And then immediately, to underscore the point, the other point of view is presented:

> But Carl Church had no wife at present, and no desire for loot; he preferred everything to stay as it was, in its place, at noon by the lake. Twenty thousand slaves a year had passed this way, up the water. Slavers, missionaries, colonial servants - all had brought something and taken something away. He would have a beer and go, changing nothing, claiming nothing. (LC, p.19)

The second comment is the implicit contrast between the reasons that brought Livingstone out from Europe to Africa, and the reasons that brought Zelide, the young English girl, out a century later. The third comment is implicit in the ruins of the new hotel that the hotel owner's husband had tried to build. Church found them when he was looking for the graves, and the implicit suggestion is that Africa, through its natural life, is reclaiming for the wilderness the orderliness of arcade and hotel room that man had tried to erect, and failed.

The story's structure is a cumulative series of suggestions about the various exploitations of Africa by Europeans - from Livingstone through to the present, leading up to the linking device of the graves, linking together the story of Livingstone's companions of a century ago, and those modern companions at the lakeside.

The story entitled "Inkalamu's Place" deals with a related aspect of that same theme. Europeans came out to Africa for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from philanthropy to

exploitation. Inkalamu Williamson set up in Africa an empire for himself that would never have been possible in Europe. The house that he built was a three storied European mansion, completely out of keeping with the African bush around it.

> Inkalamu's style was that of the poor boy who has found himself in the situation in which he can play at being the lordly eccentric, far from aristocrats who wouldn't so much as know he existed, and the jeers of his own kind. (LC, p.95)

The story line is simple. The narrator, a white man, returns to Africa for the Independence celebrations of the country where he grew up. He takes a trip out of the capital, and turns off the main road to visit the house of the romantic, legendary (for the narrator, at least) figure of the colonial 'baron', Inkalamu Williamson. The house is now deserted and beginning to fall apart - because of its initially faulty construction, and from the effects of weather, animal and plant life. After going through the house, he returns to the main road, and finds that the owner of the shop there is the youngest daughter of Inkalamu Williamson himself, tied now by poverty and her circumstances to the old ruin, and her shop on the main road.

The way the narrator interprets the experience is questionable. The narrator is blindly optimistic about the present and the future. He sees the colonial past as a prison that Africa was escaping from, and he sees the future as rosy and hopeful. It is clear also that the house is a spatial metaphor for the colonial past, with its exploitation, and its imposition of alien cultures and life patterns onto Africa. The house is repeatedly described in two perspectives - almost grand from the

outside, but mouldering, uninhabitable inside. "The whole house, inside, had been curiously uninhabitable; it looked almost the real thing, but within it was not the Englishman's castle, but a naive artefact, an African mud-and-wattle dream." (LC, p.98).

> How good that it [the house] was all being taken apart by insects, washed away by the rain, disappearing into the earth, carried away and digested, fragmented to compost. I was glad that Inkalamu's children were free of it, that none of them was here in this house of that 'character' of the territory, the old African hand whose pioneering spirit had kept the mother down in the compound and allowed the children into the house like pets. (LC, p.98,99)

The last encounter of the story reveals the fallibility of the narrator. The owner of the store is Nonny Williamson, the youngest daughter of Inkalamu. The narrator had pushed her as a baby on his bicycle, but now he doesn't recognise her, and they have nothing in common, except politeness. The ex-colonial expatriate is worlds away from the post-colonial amalgam of white and black worlds. She had not been able to go to school because she had not been white. The empire that Williamson had built had long since been sold, and the future for his children was not the rosy vision that the narrator had seen earlier in the story. "I was glad that the school where they weren't admitted when we were going to school was open to their children ..." (LC, p.99). The shock of encountering Nonny - the real alternative to that rosy vision, does not seem to have affected the narrator. Even at the end of the story, the narrator does not see that it is impossible for her to leave. "Thank God she was free of him, and the place he and his kind had made for her. All that was dead, Inkalamu was dead" (LC, p.105). The point is that she is not 'free of

him', that her poverty, which is all of his legacy that remains, effectively ties her to the store, where she hopes for a brandy permit in order to attract more trade. Her colonial inheritance requires her now to become the exploiter.

The structure of the story is centred on the two encounters (with the house, and with the woman), and is united by the narrator's response to these two experiences. Because of his point of view, there is an ironic texture to his encounter with Nonny. He tries to create memories that would be common to both of them, but he recognises how different their situations had in fact been. Inkalamu had been a figure of romance for the narrator in childhood, but Nonny had seen him as an exploiter who left behind him no inheritance and no future. Both families had sold their land, but for very different reasons and both know it. But even this insight does not reveal to him the central difference between their situations. He, as a white man, can leave the situation and go, but she can not. For the Europeans, Africa can be a transitory experience. The house that Inkalamu built will fall down. But the consequences of Williamson's colonial dreams are not to be found only in the house; it is the people he left behind who are its real victims.

Another story that deals with this transitoriness of the European in Africa is "No Place Like". This compact story is a parable in which the experience of passengers in transit is likened to the presence of expatriates in the colonies. It is the story of a woman who decides to stay behind in the transit lounge when her aeroplane is due to take off to complete its

journey. There is a fully described account of the arrival of the passengers, and their being confined to the transit lounge. The woman's uneasiness regarding her role as a traveller surfaces and she goes to the Ladies' lavatory. Here she decides to ignore the final call for boarding, and to stay behind, and find out what options lie before her. The story's overt structure is one sustained build-up to the point of decision - a gradual unfolding of the desperation in her up to the point where the decision is made.

The correspondences in the parable are very fully drawn. The transit lounge is the space in Africa occupied by the whites. They do not have a view of Africa outside that experience. That Gordimer intends this to be seen as restrictive is clear from the image that is thrown up both in the beginning and at the end of the story - the image of "grass, bougainvillaea trained like standard roses, a road glimpsed there" (LC, pp.183 and 191). Contrasted with the stuffiness, staleness and cooped up heat of the transit lounge, this image holds freedom and excitement.

The transit lounge is stuffy because the air-conditioner is not working and the windows are sealed for the air-conditioning. The books on display are trivial - cheap thrillers, or else concerned with the exploitation of sex. The woman carries a bag containing the remnants of her travels - duty free liquor, yesterday's newspaper from a foreign city, gloves for the cold climate left behind, a Swiss Army knife, a wallet containing the travel documents. These stand for various aspects of western civilisation that colonists accumulate - allegiances to 'home', foreign technologies, bureaucracies, clothing patterns. Special

attention is given to the hair brush, which is full of her own hair, which being separated from its source of life, is now dead.

In the parable, the whites are all destined, by virtue of the role they play, to leave the transit lounge. The shiny plastic boarding pass is their passport back to the plane. Through the woman, the narrator articulates the sense of purpose-lessness of the transitoriness of their stay. "How long had they been in this place? What time was it where she had left ... Was it still yesterday, there? Or tomorrow. And where was she going? She thought, I shall find out when I get there" (LC, p.185,196).

The whites are also condemned into various roles - both in the story and in the colonial experience. Black vendors are trying to sell ivory curios and pictures. The woman decides that she is not going to buy anything. "To refuse was to upset the ordination of roles. He (the vendor) was there to sell 'ivory' bracelets and 'African' art; they - these people shut up for him in the building - had been brought there to buy" (LC, p.186). This is either an ironic comment on the exploitation of the raw materials of Africa, or else a reversal of roles, because whites have customarily been the traders, and blacks the customers. The picture of the President in the transit lounge is seen in contrast to a fading relic of the the colonial past, the butterfly collection mounted below it. In the lavatory, the dead hairs in her hairbrush become symbolic of her own situation. These are contrasted with the beautiful living hair of the Indian woman, and with her own living hair. She tries to see out of the

little window, but only catches a glimpse of a dusty palm tree, and a black crow. The woman pictures to herself the plane leaving, and then turns her mind to what to do next. The duty free liquor could be poured down the lavatory, but it would not be as easy to dispense with western technology, as represented by the Swiss Army knife. All the time she is conscious of the image of freedom which exists outside the little window.

The meaning of the parable is clear. Gordimer's intention is to present a view of colonialism, and what she considers to be a valid response to it. Colonialism is a transitory occupation, and the colonists are bound by their role to leave. However, it is possible to break out of the role, and rid oneself of the appurtenances of the colonizers - the newspapers from overseas, the duty-free liquor. Leaving the technology of the west is more of a problem, but what the laying down of the colonial rule offers in compensation is a vitality, a glimpse of freedom, a road leading to the future.

"Rain-Queen" also deals with Europeans in Africa, but the emphasis is more on the private world of the narrator and her circle, than the public world of the Congo. Gordimer does include references to Tshombe fleeing and returning, and the reason why Jillie, the narrator, goes to Elizabethville is that her father, a South African engineer, is contracted to build a road from Elizabethville to Tshombe's residence. But these references indicate a time dimension only; they locate the story in time, and they are used to indicate the passing of time.

The story's theme is the 'corruption' of a young girl by

grown-ups, "learning adult values the hard way".[10] Narrated in the first person by the young girl herself, the story deals with the affair between Jillie and Marco Gatti, one of Jillie's father's engineers. Gordimer based the affair on a saying she had encountered in the Congo some years before the story was written. "They told me that when it rained in the afternoon, a Congolese would say: Little shower, just time for a girl. And then go off and find some girl and the affair lasted just for the hour the rain lasted."[10] While concentrating on the details of her relationship with Marco, Jillie also considers the involvement of all the other Europeans, especially Eleanora, who is Marco's wife, the Swede, her own parents and the South African boyfriend Alan. In the end, Eleanora becomes pregnant, and this terminates Marco's affair with Jillie. The ending of the story reveals the lapse of time between the incident itself, and the telling of it, some years later. Jillie reveals what she has become, as a consequence of her first affair.

In one sense, Jillie is a fertility symbol - taken up by Marco yet dropped once Eleanora is pregnant. Jillie is queen when it rains, but only then. When the rain is over, the affair is over. Yet the story's impact is not from the account of the affair itself, but from the pattern of behaviour that the affair initiates for Jillie. That way has become a norm for her. And this is where the corruption had occurred. Jillie was a child when she arrived in Elizabethville. Before the affair starts,

[10]Gray, p.83.

she admits to being both very young for her age, and unknowing (LC, p.153, 155). Marco imposes himself on her, but she is a willing, even demanding accomplice. As the affair develops, she recognises what is happening to her.

> Marco taught me how to make love, in the caravan, and everything that I had thought of as 'life' was put away, as I had at other times folded the dolls' clothes, packed the Monopoly set and the sample collection and given them to the servant. (LC, p.155,156)

Her participation in the affair requires her to conform with 'adult' values and requirements. "The innocence of the grown-ups fascinated me. They engaged in play-play, while I had given it up." (LC, p.158). This 'play-play' involved her in deceit and complicity almost right from the start. She is astonished at Marco's normal behaviour towards her father when he has been spending the afternoon making love to the daughter, but she finds that she can behave normally towards Eleanora just as easily.

> I took in the smell of Eleanora's skin, felt the brush of her hair on my nose, and it was done, forever ... It was something I could never have imagined; Marco and I, as we really were, didn't exist here. (LC, p.156,157)

She plays the game according to the adult rules. She recognises herself in the role she was fitted into - "If I was no one person's partner in our circle, I was a love object, handed round them all" (LC, p.157).

Marco sees the affair as a 'dream' - a time apart from the demands of the everyday, the road, Eleanora, Jillie's father. Jillie describes, on a number of occasions, Marco's words to this effect after they have been making love. Of course, she is drawn into the dream as well, and she accepts and adopts the deceit,

complicity, game-playing and infidelity, and it becomes her 'everyday'. For Marco, the dream is over when Eleanora becomes pregnant. For Jillie, the dream continues, and her own marriage is seen in terms of the many lovers she has had.

"Abroad" is a satire of a prejudiced, old-fashioned Afrikaner who ventures into the new world of independent Africa. The satire is not savage, as Gordimer's treatment of racial prejudice in professed 'liberals' normally is. Instead the narrative situation, in which the narrator quite frequently lapses into the jargon and attitudes of the man being described, allows for irony to ameliorate the satire.

Manie Swemmer, having spend some time in Northern Rhodesia in the thirties, and the rest of his life, bar the war, in South Africa, decided to return to Zambia (as it now is) to visit his two sons. Manie prides himself on being broad-minded - he has travelled - and he is faintly derisive of his cousin, Gysbert, whose life-style is rigidly traditional in the South African Afrikaner way. When he arrives in Zambia, he and Willie try to get a bed for him in an hotel. Because of the Independence anniversary celebrations, the only place he can get is in a shared room, together with an Indian from Delhi. This stretches his willingness to be broadminded, but he does go along with it. Various incidents in the bar restore his sense of well-being. He meets a well-spoken, educated and respectful black man who had spent some time in South Africa, and Manie enjoys talking to him. Later, when Manie is jostled by a black lout, action is taken by black policemen to throw the unruly element out. This impresses

Manie, and he starts discussing plans to come up to Zambia to settle. When he gets to his room after supper, he finds that the Indian has returned to his room, and has drawn the bolt and refuses to answer the door. When Manie makes a fuss about this to the receptionist, he is put into another room which had been reserved for blacks who had not yet arrived. The thought of sharing with a black man is too much for Manie, so when he is in the room, the first thing he does is to draw the bolt, just as the Indian had done.

The unreliable narration is responsible for the tone of the mild satire. The disparity between Manie Swemmer's actions (drawing the bolt), and his professed broadmindedness requires the reader to approach whatever he says or does with caution. He disparages Gysbert Swemmer for adherence to old-fashioned ways, yet in his own rigidity and finally revealed prejudices, he too is disparaged by the story. The narrator's assumption of the jargon and attitudes of Manie Swemmer renders his narrative unreliable, and it is this unreliability that reveals the prejudices.

> ... the place had gone and changed its name from Northern Rhodesia to Zambia. Not that the change would frighten Manie Swemmer if he decided to make the trip. After all, it wasn't as if he was going to drag a woman up there. (LC, p.64)

There are other instances where his prejudices are betrayed.

> Manie Swemmer moved his elbow within half-an-inch of a nudge " (LC, p.77)

before realising that he would be nudging a black man, so he stopped. And then when the hooligans in the bar are kicked out by the Police:

> ... there was a brief uproar: of course natives are great ones for shouting. But the black hooligans were carted away by their own police like a bunch of scruffy dogs; no nonsense. (LC, p.80)

That these sentiments are Manie's is indicated by his repeating the last two words in direct speech himself, immediately after this passage.

The most blatant example of his prejudice occurs when Manie Swemmer realises that the receptionist is considering putting him in a room with blacks.

> "Look," he said. "The coolie, all right, I didn't say anything. But don't put me in with an African, now, man. I mean, I've only just got here, give me a bit of time. You can't expect to put me in with a native, right away, first thing." (LC, p.81)

The final act of drawing the bolt, apart from its symbolic significance, is given an extra dimension of meaning because as he works at the bolt to close it, he gives a "grunt that was almost a giggle" (LC, p.82).

These five stories make a number of points about the presence of the white man in Africa, and the contact of Europe and Africa. For the most part, the relationship is unequal, with the whites cast in the role of sojourner or exploiter. This treatment differs from the treatment of James Bray in A Guest of Honour who comes, through the course of the novel, to a full identification with the new force of African socialism, opposed to the neo-colonialism of the Mweta regime. It is in the novel that Gordimer articulates the reformulation of problems and possibilities facing Africa, including South Africa. The stories mentioned here do not go that far. They serve mainly as further

examples of Gordimer's preoccupation with exposing human weaknesses; racism, personal prejudices, colonial attitudes and the fragmentation of society's bonds. Only in "No Place Like" does Gordimer suggest an alternative to the white world of Africa. These emphases support the contention that it is in the novels that Gordimer is now making her significant statements, and that the stories occupy a correspondingly less important place in her output.

The next group of stories to be dealt with are those in which Gordimer attempts "to assess and expose the elements of human conflict and harmony as they develop within the context of fascist terror." [11] The first two stories, "The Life of the Imagination" and "An Intruder" are stories of psychological disturbance resulting from the effects of a deep-seated fear. Gordimer uses sexuality as a vehicle for investigation of the private life of individuals. Both stories have a white woman who is the victim at a deeply implicit level of the destructive forces of hate and fear, set up by the apartheid society. The other three stories deal with the changes that occur in people again as a result of living in the apartheid society. Deception, betrayal, false accusation and corruption pervert the humanity of the white people presented in these stories. Gordimer turns her attention back to white people, partly, no doubt, because her

11 Frederick Ivor Case, "Nadine Gordimer: Selected Stories," World Literature Written in English, 17, (1975), p.55.

access to those friends she had made earlier was restricted, but more importantly, because she has to confront again the question of what role lies open to white people in the apartheid society, particularly, those whites opposed to it.

"The Life of the Imagination" is the story of a woman called Barbara. Very early in her life, she grasps the life of the imagination, and this capacity for living partly in reality, partly in her imagination stays with her. She grows up, marries, has children - and as her architect husband is successful, she is sufficiently materially wealthy to continue cherishing the life of her imagination. After this background has been sketched, the action of the story starts, and is about her affair with a doctor. Her marriage is presented in terms of its separateness - she and her husband "got on almost wordlessly well, now and then turning instinctively to each other, and were alone, he with his work and she with her books" (LC, p.109). Her infidelity does not produce any overt signs of guilt, apart from a very scrupulous regard for propriety. The various features of the affair are explained, culminating in the account of the evening when, because of her husband's absence, she is able to bring the doctor to her bed, where they make love. When he leaves, he neglects to lock the door, and as Barbara lies alone in her bed, she hears the door banging, and she fantasises about a black intruder who will enter with a knife and attack her. The story ends with morning, and nothing has in fact happened.

The final fantasy is well prepared for. Barbara's early attachment to the life of the imagination is explicitly dealt with, and even when she is married, she is often identified with

her pondokkie on the Crocodile River - a place of isolation and retreat for her, where she goes when she wants to be alone. During the affair, she often imagines what those parts of her lover's life are like when he is not with her. Thus when he leaves her bedroom, the reader is expecting a fantasy of some sort. What is initially startling is what she fantasises about. The subject matter of her fantasy is not simply a private concern, with a personally created private bogeyman. Rather it is the violating intrusion of the public domain into her cocooned existence. The wealth of the South African government, the great mining and industrial companies is achieved through the exploitation of black labour. This wealth is the source of Barbara's husband's success as an architect. Barbara is never seen as being conscious of this indirect exploitation, nor is any perception of guilt hinted at in her everyday living. Yet she knows of the fear - "she found herself believing, like any other suburban matron, that someone must enter" (LC, p.121). The fantasy is a fusion of both private and public domains. It is a stereotyped situation - black intruder, white woman victim, and the imagined assault is both violent and sexual. She feeds her imagination with the stereotype and at the end, in a climactic switch from reported narrative to personal utterance, welcomes the final almost orgiastic release.

> She was empty, unable to summon anything but this stale fantasy shared with the whole town, the whole white population. She lay there possessed by it, and she thought, she violently longed - they will come straight into the room and stick a knife into me. No time to cry out. Quick. Deep. Over. (LC, p.122)

"An Intruder" develops the notion of the world other than that of the everyday a stage further. In "The Life of the Imagination", the story's central moment is a moment of private fantasy prompted by fear, repression, and the internalisation of stereotyped situations from the South African context. The central moment of "An Intruder" involves action unconsciously motivated and performed by the male figure as an attack on his wife, the female victim.

"An Intruder" is the story of the courtship and marriage of James Seago and Marie. He had been divorced two or three times before, and had been through many jobs. While there is something attractive about him within the context of the story - he is popular with his friends and he charms and captivates both Marie and her mother - to the reader he comes across as potentially vicious, unscrupulous and manipulative. The climax of the story is the crisis that impels Marie into adulthood. After their marriage, James and Marie move into a small unhappy flat. Marie becomes pregnant, and is reassured of James's special affection for her because he had not had any children by any of his previous wives. Their life together seems to hinge around parties and drinking. Usually when James drank, he reached a point of drunkenness when he was unable to remember anything that he said or did. One evening they return from a late night party and go to bed. When Marie wakes up, she finds the flat has been violated by an intruder. The kitchen has been ransacked, and the curtains, put up to conceal the thick mesh burglar-proofing, ripped down. On the large sofa are three piles; of contraceptive jelly and haircombings; of toothpaste and razor-

blades, and of rotting vegetable matter from the dustbin. In the bathroom, her underwear is "arranged into an obscene collage with intimate objects of toilet" (LC, p.90). It is a few days before Marie comes to understand what had happened, that the 'intruder' was in fact James, in his blind drunkenness unconsciously reacting against her sexuality and its implications.

The story is about the repression of rage and hatred, and how Marie becomes the victim of James's perverted personality. Marie's sexuality is clearly referred to, but she is initially presented as 'innocent' or more correctly, 'repressed'. At first, she smiles "the small slow smile that men brought to her face without her knowing why" (LC, p.83), and yet, when she sits on James's lap, she is filled with 'appalling sexual desire' - but the simile used to describe this is "like a child bottling up tears" (LC, p.85). Her sexual relationship with James is directed to his satisfaction, not a shared satisfaction, and she remains sexually unfulfilled. "He taught her to do all the strange things she would not have guessed were love-making at all, and that he seemed to enjoy so much" (LC, p.85). The second perversion, this time of her mind, is shown by the name she suggests for herself as the label he would give her should they get divorced, as in the case of the previous wives. The climax of the story occurs not through Marie's expression of rage against James, as one would expect, but paradoxically, James's against Marie. Despite the nature of the imagery, which conforms with the "pattern in literature written by women in which a maddened self would emerge on behalf of the 'feminine' docile

self",[12] it is clearly James who creates the havoc, and he who sets up the disgusting collage. The exploitation of Marie will continue, because James will remain unconscious of what he has done, and he will not recognise the anger or ugliness that prompted it. Marie realises this, and in that realisation, undergoes the rite of passage into adulthood.[13]

The next three stories deal with the corruption that occurs in people as a result of their involvement in a society which, because of its acceptance of the imposed apartheid laws and structures, perverts and distorts any human relationship.

"Open House" is the ironic title of an American journalist's attempt to meet the 'right' sort of black Africans. Frances Taver is a South African woman who had been involved with black trade unions in the fifties, and now, in the late sixties is one of the people who could provide foreign visitors who wanted to know the truth about South Africa with introductions to the right sort of people. When Robert Ceretti the American journalist phones her, she is at first reluctant to provide him with what he wants, a chance to meet and talk to articulate blacks opposed to the regime. However, some inner compulsion drives her to set up a lunch party for him, and she invites a number of black acquaintances. Ceretti, even though a bit naïve, is keenly interested. He doesn't see that "under the tougher apartheid

[12] Dorothy Driver, "Nadine Gordimer: The Politicisation of Women," English in Africa, 10, No. 2 (1983), p.44.

[13] The interpretation of this story owes a lot to the discussion of this story in Dorothy Driver's paper.

laws of the 1960s, Frances can only provide introductions to time-servers, phoneys, black collaborators with the regime."[14] Both Ceretti and the blacks who do come seem satisfied with the luncheon - they all get what they want out of it, and they leave Frances in mid-afternoon. When she goes to the kitchen, she finds a note from an African friend of hers, an ANC member who had gone underground and who occasionally comes to visit her. The note indicates that the visitor knew what was going on, and Frances is half-embarrassed by her choice of black guests.

Frances phones Ceretti a few days later because she felt that she had to say to him,

> "You mustn't be taken in ... You must understand ... Even they've become what they are because things are the way they are. Being phony is being corrupted by the situation ... and that's real enough. We're made out of that." (LC, p.150)

Ceretti realises from the note of urgency in her voice "that something complicated was wrong, but he knew, too, that he wouldn't be there long enough to find out ..." (LC, p.151).

Just as the previous two stories concentrated on the private or inner world of the corruption of the apartheid society, this story deals with the public or outer set of relationships between people. The friendships that Frances had enjoyed in the fifties had been ended because the situation that had allowed friendship to develop out of natural causes, i.e. the market place, is changed. The only 'friendships' now possible are those such as

14 Frank Tuohy, "Breath of Change," Times Literary Supplement, 25 April, 1980, p.462.

are revealed in the story, which do not really involve friendship at all. The 'tragedy' is that people like Ceretti are included in the phoniness of such relationships, and are not in a position to appreciate it. All three black men are flawed - their integrity has been compromised, or their motives are purely personal advancement. The lawyer Edgar Xixo complains querulously about his harrassment by the Special Branch, but the gravity of his complaint is undercut when he is compared with Samson Dumile, whose practice he had taken over, who is described in vital and exciting terms, "roaring with laughter" as he relates one of his experiences with the Special Branch. Spuds Buthelezi is disparaged:

> He had patiently put together and taken apart, many times, in his play, ingredients faithfully lifted from the work of African writers who got published, and he was himself African: what else could be needed but someone to take it up? (LC, p.148).

Jason Madela, the seller of patent medicines and hair straightener is presented as a cynical exploiter of the black market for his medicines, even though Frances claims that he has no illusions about his products. He certainly has no illusions about the nature of the luncheon, or his invitation to it.

The next story that deals with effects of the apartheid regime on South African society is "Africa Emergent". It is in fact two stories; one half is based on the exile and suicide of a black artist in America, and the other half is the redemption of a black man's credibility because of his arrest and detention by the Police. The story is narrated by a white man, an architect, who is friendly with both black men. The story is couched in

such a way that it appears to be the body of a letter to someone who lives outside South Africa. The narrator says, "don't be quick to jump to conclusions from five or six thousand miles away" (LC, p.233). At other points in the narrative specific explanations of South Africanisms occur i.e. "tsotsi, street urchin" (LC, p.236), or "He was fetched from his own room one night and imprisoned. That's perfectly legal here, it's the hundred-and-eighty-day Detention Act" (LC, p.247). In this guise, then, the analysis of South African society can be validly presented through the pretence of explanation to someone outside it.

The narrator explains how he came to be involved with blacks as a student, and how this contact was developed by his work in a dramatic company that was multi-racial. In this company, he met the black man who remains unnamed in the story, and then through him, Elias Nkomo. The white man makes it possible for Elias to work uninterruptedly on his sculpture, and is able to assist with Elias's general education as well. Elias's success provides him with the offer of a scholarship in America, but the South African government refuses to give him a passport. When his friend, who has also been given a scholarship, gets his passport, Elias takes an exit permit and the two of them go off together. Elias finds he can't do any work there; he becomes progressively unhappier and eventually commits suicide. His friend returns, using Elias's ticket, and rumours soon start of his being a police spy. Other reports of the favoured treatment he gets seem to reinforce the notion of his being in the employ of the Special Branch. The narrator sums up the situation of suspicion and alienation in the

following cynical judgement: "We have reached the stage where if a man is black, literate, has 'political' friends and white friends, and a passport, he must be considered a police spy." (LC, p.246). Finally, the black man is arrested and held in detention for over two hundred and seventy days, and his credibility is restored - he has proved himself.

The specific features of the apartheid society that Gordimer is drawing attention to are the uncertainty, the paranoia, the prevalence of rumours and the falseness of appearances. Lack of trust, and the suspicions created by the network of police spies prevert any real relationships between people. The narrator shows how the possible friendship between himself and the black man is destroyed by the rumours and suspicions about the black man's apparently being favoured by the police. His friends are arrested and banned, yet he remains free. Then, when he too was arrested, the switch from rejection to acceptance is easily made because both rejection and acceptance were based on a façade of rumour and not on any evidence at all, except that he was in detention. The distance between private and public selves is apparent, yet the private self (of both the black man and of Elias) is not accessible. The narrator recognises that "neither our political bitterness nor our glibness with fashionable phrases can come near what combination of forces within and without, led him [Elias] to the fatal baptism of that early morning" (LC, p.242,243). Similarly, knowledge of the cheerful, plump exterior of the black man in no way makes it possible to reach any definite conclusion whether or not he was a police spy.

That remains always a matter of rumour. Gordimer manages to reveal the moral shallowness of such judgements by the rather cynical tone of the last paragraph.

The third story that presents an analysis of South African society is "A Satisfactory Settlement". This story is about the way a child is corrupted by adult attitudes on race. A mother and her son move to a house in a different suburb after she has separated from her husband. She is kept very busy during the day settling in, and her son is given a measure of freedom to do what he likes. He wanders around the neighbourhood, getting to know the blacks who frequent the pavements. The interaction is amicable, and accepting. The mother's nights are disturbed by a black prostitute who wanders the streets, carrying on in a loud monologue of accusations and protests. One night, the prostitute tries to get into the room of the next door neighbour's gardener, and the mother has to remonstrate with the prostitute. This wakes up the neighbours, and the man kicks the prostitute back out onto the street. The next day, the neighbours and the mother discuss the incident, and they mention the presence of so many blacks in the vicinity. The boy, listening to this, manages to insinuate that the disappearance of his bicycle (owing entirely to his own negligence) could possibly be linked to this episode. When the grown-ups seem to accept this, he is able to cover himself further by suggesting that it is a particular black man who is the most likely suspect, and this is the man who had shown the most friendship to the white child.

Initially the boy responds easily and openly to the black people. Even at this stage, though, he has learnt certain

stereotypes. The first thing he says to the black man with a new transistor radio is, "Did you steal it?" (LC, p.208). The boy starts showing a reluctance when he buys a funnel from the old black man, and the boy gets scared that the funnel might have been stolen, and that somehow he, the boy, would get into trouble as a result. He hides the funnel and does not tell his mother about it because he senses that she would disapprove. This condition of suppressed guilt is allowed to blossom with the false accusation that he makes at the end of the story - one which he hopes will deflect attention from his carelessness in leaving his bicycle out at night. From the attitudes that the adults adopt when they discuss the prostitute, ("'I make a point of it - don't hang about my property, I tell them. They're watching for you to go out at night, that's the thing.'" (LC, p.217), the boy learns that you can impose onto the blacks, your own version of black nature, black criminality. From this point, the boy easily adopts that attitude to his situation, and by the end of the story, it is clear that the adults are quite happy to accept the guilt of the old black man.

The narrator articulates some of the mother's prejudices. Natives are "simply one of the nuisances of this quiet neighbourhood" (LC, p.213) until they start intruding into the 'privacy' of the white world - symbolised by the shouting of obscenities into the quiet of the night. At one stage, the suggestion is that the voice is part of the white mind as well.

> The summons was out of the dark as if the voice came out of her own sleep like those words spoken aloud with which one wakes oneself with a start. YOU RUBBISH ... don't

> say me ... he want ... L-I-A-R-S ... don't say me.
>
> Or that horrible jabber when a tape recorder is run backwards. Is that my voice? Shrill, ugly; merely back-to-front? L-I-A-R-S The voice that had slipped the hold of control, good sense, self-respect, proper provision, the future to think of. (LC, p.214)

The varying levels of meaning in the title make it an ironic comment on the action. The satisfactory settlement can refer to the pending divorce, or to the satisfactory way in which the prostitute was got rid of, or even to the satisfactory way in which the boy was able to evade the responsibility for the bicycle's being stolen.

Through these five stories, Gordimer portrays the perverting and debilitating effects of the apartheid society. The repressed fear that both causes the distance between white and black people, and also perpetuates it, causes psychological aberration of normal behaviour at a very private level within individuals. The alienation of people from each other, and from their true selves sets up artificial façades which have to become the interface at which contact between people takes place. Implicit in the whole structure of apartheid is the basic and fundamental unfairness of its implementation - it is a vehicle by which whites maintain and perpetuate their domination over the blacks. This set of stories shows how Gordimer's perspective is changing. From concentrating on individual encounters which make a general point, in her earliest stories, Gordimer has developed a politicised perspective in which the white society and its workings becomes the subject of her scrutiny. She uses the individual encounter because through that encounter she can make

points about the society at large. It is in the stories of this collection, thought, that for the first time, the emphasis of the analysis appears to be more on the society at large than on individuals that comprise it.

"The Credibility Gap" is an experimental story, which is very different in structure from the others in this collection. Because of its subject matter, it seems appropriate to deal with it at this stage. The first feature which is experimental is the two tier structure of the narrative. The one level is the set of staccato exchanges people engage in when arguing who should answer the telephone; the other is a connected series of scenes from the domestic life of the Aucamp family. The staccato exchanges sometimes are related directly to the scene that follows, but sometimes the connection is tenuous, and associative. The second exchange, "I'll go - it's for me" is followed by a passage which shows the willingness of Pattie the daughter, to answer the phone herself, and the third exchange, "No, it's alright, I'll go. I'm expecting a friend" is followed by "Some of the girls feared themselves pregnant ..." (LC, p.55). The exchanges themselves do not form an independent narrative that can stand on its own - they rely on the position within the other narrative for their effect. The series of scenes from the Aucamp family does not build up to a climax or a specific crisis which allows the revelation of meaning in the ending. The story's characters are presented so that no one character really dominates enough to be called the central figure. Consequently, one has to approach the story differently from the others. This

quote from Levi-Strauss, which is introduced into the story by Pattie to illustrate a point she is making, seems to be helpful in indicating how the reader should approach the story.

> As he moves forward within his environment, Man takes with him all the positions that he has occupied in the past, and all those that he will occupy in the future. He is everywhere at the same time, a crowd which, in the act of moving forward, yet recapitulates at every instant every step that it has ever taken in the past. (LC, p.54)

Man's life then is not a series of moments proceeding in linear fashion towards an end point. Rather it has to be perceived as a simultaneous amalgam of all moments. Understanding the story requires not an attempt to see the story as a linear development towards the high point of the ending, but rather a story which at every stage contains 'all the positions' of the story.

The 'credibility gap' seems strongest in the person of Robbie, the youngest child of Doris Aucamp. He is separated from the others by his youth, his attitudes and his honesty. He is too young to remember Sharpeville, and the detention of Doris Aucamp, which was one of the consequences of that occasion. His answer to Pattie's question, "'If I fall for a black one (man), how would we manage?'" (LC, p.57), is blunt and direct, and totally at odds with the opinions of the other members of the family. His honesty is revealed by his comments on Pattie's behaviour in the face of the death of her friend Kathy. He doesn't believe in her expression of grief.

The connection between the other members of the family is close. The two elder children, Andrew and Pattie, remember the

Sharpeville period distinctly, and this ties them to their mother very closely. Pattie often feels the need to be supportive and defensive towards her mother (LC, p.52). Pattie and her mother are seen to be close in a number of ways - as women, as confidantes, and after the death of Kathy, as accomplices. "There was a closeness between them, a complicity of generations" (LC, p.59).

There is a political dimension to the story as well. The credibility gap yawns between those who remember the impact of Sharpeville (and also the pre-Sharpeville period when "there still were real political opposition movements in South Africa" (LC, p.52)), and those who don't. Pattie is quite happy to be friends with blacks - she even considers the idea of black men as lovers, but for Robbie and his friends, that attitude is foreign. His friends are the ones who accept unknowingly the sycophantic address of 'My baasie', or 'Master' Johnny, from the family's maidservant. Sharpeville is the dividing line - as it is in South African political history, one of the major turning points. Andrew sees his brother as "a nice, God-fearing guardian of the white race growing up" (LC, p.57). The gap has its final articulation when Doris Aucamp, who had been described as having the serenity and courage to turn bullets to water (LC, p.57), meets Robbie after Kathy's death, and he is not convinced that Pattie feels any real grief. Robbie is not to be persuaded. "He nodded his head: <u>you see</u> - in the manner of one who accepts that no one will have an explanation for him" (LC, p.60). Doris is forced to acknowledge the gap between herself and her son - she doesn't try to touch him, and the final comment of the story is

the restatement, "the followers of those African prophets who claimed bullets could be turned to water had, after all, fallen everywhere on battlefields, from the Cape to Madagascar" (LC, p.60).

The remaining five stories deal with private themes - private in that the balance and interaction of the social and the personal is not maintained, and the personal element dominates, with the society introduced primarily to clarify or to provide a framework for individual portraits. Two of these stories deal with friendships between women.

"A Third Presence" deals with the relationship over a long period of time between two sisters, Rose and Naomi Rasovsky. Naomi, the pretty one, marries well and is materially happy - she has a husband, two children, a home. The other sister, Rose, disadvantaged by "the sad Jewish ugliness of her face" (LC, p.39) has brains and so she is sent out to work to help support the parents. "Certainly, necessity being what it was, Naomi was the one who came off best" (LC, p.39). Yet the story proceeds to reverse that situation. Rose is shown to be the sister who leads the more interesting life - she has an unconventionality that leads her to live with three men yet marry none of them; to be involved in the world of ideas; and to have the independence to have plastic surgery to her face, just before Naomi's fortieth birthday. This surgery transforms her, and Naomi sees her sister in an entirely new way. This transformation is the third presence, the extra component to the relationship between Rose and Naomi. From it, Naomi comes to realise that it was indeed

Rose who has gained more from life than she, Naomi, has.

There is an irony of these reversed expectations. Naomi, who seemed to be the one given access to the fullness of life when she left school and married successfully, has found life repetitive and trivial. Marriage is seen as restrictive and limiting to Naomi. "Since she was a child, she had known nothing but extensions of herself and her own interest ..." (LC, p.47). She had not had the chance to learn living with a variety of men and situations such as Rose had made for herself. Rose had been pushed out into Johannesburg at an early age and had had to make it on her own. Naomi at one stage felt sad for Rose because of this 'separation' of Rose from the family. Yet Rose early on had discarded the image of expectations she had had as a child, the "semblance of the nest" (LC, p.44), and had fulfilled herself on her own terms. And she had come to see "how pathetically limited and meagre the preoccupations of Naomi's household were" (LC, p.45). The story's crisis occurs when Naomi, seeing Rose differently after her operation, realises the wealth that Rose had gathered to herself, and how it is that now she has lost the one advantage she had had over Rose. With this insight on her part, the relationship of Naomi with Rose changes.

The second story dealing with the theme of friendship between two women is "Otherwise Birds Fly In". The two women are Kate and Toni, and their histories, together with the history of their relationship, are drawn in fine detail as an extended introduction to the story. The friendship is never possessive or demanding. They see each other once or twice a year after their marriages, but that is sufficient.

> Although this was never formulated in so many words, they had plumbed (but perhaps it had been there always, instinctive basis of their being 'friends' against other indications of temperament) a touchstone in common: what finally mattered wasn't the graph of an event or human relationship in its progress, but the casual or insignificant sign or moment you secretly took away from it. (LC, p.196,196).

When Kate settles down in Geneva, and marries Egon; and when Toni marries Marcus, the casual sign of the friendship comes to be, in Kate's mind, the bottle of Poire William and the bunch of flowers that Toni had brought with her when she arrived in Geneva with Marcus for the first time, and subsequently. Even when the visits became fewer, and Toni was living the rich woman's lifestyle, "yet once or twice a year, always, she arrived at Kate's for a night or for a day or two, with Poire William and flowers" (LC, p.197).

The central incident of the story occurs during a visit that Toni and her daughter make to Kate and Egon. After a whirlwind tour through the south of France, very fully described but serving only as spatial framework, Kate rescues Emma from drowning. A small lapse in attention by Toni had allowed Emma to wander off, and she had fallen into the water. Kate, who had been dozing, had woken up and gone to the waterside, almost as if answering a call. Toni felt herself to be under a special obligation to Kate, because she felt "that because it was her child who lay in the water, Kate had woken up and walked to the spot. No-one else would have known ..." (LC, p.205).

Toni's response is the key to the story. As a rich woman, she had developed a way of life, a pattern of variety, that was

made possible by her wealth. Kate feels, even during the whirlwind tour to Arles, through the Camargue to Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, to Marseilles, to Bandol, and then back to the villa, that Toni was not enjoying it in the same way that she and Egon were. The excitement of novelty was what Kate and Egon were feeling, but Kate feels that Toni had lost that ability to feel the novelty. She also feels that Toni doesn't realise this change in her, this assumption that went with wealth, and consequently was not being true to herself. This is effectively demonstrated in the ending. Toni gives Kate a very expensive emerald and diamond collar. Kate won't take it and Toni, exasperated says, "'Surely I'm entitled to give you something.'" What Kate wants is the friendship, the real Toni of the enduring relationship, and this is symbolised by the Poire William and the flowers.

"The Bride of Christ" is the story of one of the rites of passage of childhood that Lyndall Berger undergoes. The ritual of the rite of passage is the Christian confirmation. Her parents, Sydney and Shirley are non-practising Jews, and they see no good point by Lyndall's request to be allowed to be confirmed. Lyndall is at a girl's boarding school, and all her friends are being confirmed. Shirley tries to dissuade her by using arguments relating to the Church's failure to live up to its own doctrines, but this doesn't affect Lyndall as her reason for wanting to be confirmed has more to do with peer group conformity than any internalised religious need or intention. This is not to say that she doesn't attempt to take the whole procedure

seriously. However, seven months after the Confirmation, at Easter, Lyndall's decision to go to a party, and not to go to church on Good Friday, provokes an attack from Shirley. Because no one else in the family feels strongly about it, Shirley finds herself isolated and so she gives in and helps Lyndall prepare herself for the party.

The central concern of the story is personal - and has to do with the development of Lyndall Berger. There is a brief argument about the Church's failure, but that is not central to the story. Sydney Berger's rejection of religion is never explained, and Shirley explains hers in terms of its social inadequacy and hypocrisy. Lyndall's fervour to embrace Christianity is seen by Sydney as "awakening sexuality finding an emotional outlet" (LC, p.171), and this view would be justified by her actions over the Easter Weekend. What is of more interest is the role and attitude of Shirley. By trying to insist that the child undergo the whole experience from a religious point of view, and then be consistent in her observance, she is setting herself at odds with the child, whose perception of the experience is very different. The child was genuinely engaged in the experience at the time it was happening, but she had not sustained that emotional intensity. As a confirmation present, Shirley had not followed the pattern of other mothers by giving her daughter a religious trinket. Instead, she had used that money for a donation to the African Children's Feeding Scheme. At the time, in her excitement, Lyndall had accepted that action. Later, she doesn't, because she realises how in that, she was not being allowed to conform with her peer group.

At the end, Shirley's surrender is her response to the uncertainty surrounding initiation procedures in a non-homogenous society.

> Tribal Africans took their young into the bush for a few weeks and got it over with at once. Those free from the rites of primitive people repeated plaintive remarks, tags of a litany of instruction half but never quite forgotten, from one generation to the next. (LC, p.175)

"A Meeting in Space" is an enigmatic story. First published in The New Yorker under the title, "Say Something African", it is the story of a young South African boy, Clive, who meets and is befriended by a precocious American child, in a village in the south coast of France. The American boy is left to his own devices by his parents, loaded with presents as a substitute for family affection. The two boys become inseparable, rushing around the village, taking pictures of incidents, and making tape-recordings of the noises - all part of a project of Matt's. The holiday suddenly comes to an end, and Clive goes back to South Africa. He has no idea of Matt's address, and so will never maintain contact with him. The meeting between the two of them was a meeting in space, unconnected with its surroundings in time or place.

"Why Haven't You Written?" is the story of an unsatisfying marriage, and of infidelity. The central figure is an engineer, who spends most of his time in America, sorting out problems with the drills that his company manufactures. As a result, he is away from home for weeks at a stretch, which places additional strain on an already dulled relationship. He starts an affair

with the wife of an American professor, and the story deals with his attempt to end his marriage. Faced with the double loneliness when his mistress has to leave him to return to her husband, he tries to forsake the company of his hosts and colleagues, in order to reach a decision about his marriage. One evening, drunk after a long session in the hotel bar, he comes to a decision to write to his wife and tell her that he is leaving her. The letter is written and posted, even though there is a postal strike on, and he has to break into the post box in order to post the letter. He remains uncertain whether or not it will actually reach his wife. He does return to England, and his wife has not yet received the letter, and he starts changing his mind. It is only some six weeks later, when he has stopped worrying about the letter, that it finally arrives. His wife takes the letter and reads it and her response is one of excitement, because she realises that it is a love-letter, even though not about her. She re-reads it, and then destroys it, getting rid of it in a rubbish bin well away from the house.

The problem with the marriage is that it had become duty-bound and lifeless. When he returns from America, "he did what he must, he went to bed with her" (LC, p.229). This dullness is not a cause for reproach from his wife; she maintains a proprietorial but restrained grasp on the marriage. The excitement she feels, at the end of the story, almost a sexual excitement, is from the knowledge that there is indeed love in the man.

This story, like the others, suffers in comparison with those which operate on the basis of maintaining a balance between

the personal and social. This principle of realist fiction is one which Gordimer effectively uses in her best writing; and so, for example, the use of typical characters fully realised in typical situations gives the first ten stories discussed in this chapter a depth that is lacking in the other six. In these six the private dimension predominates, especially in the last three, and the stories consequently start verging on the idiosyncratic. However, this reinforces the point made in the previous chapter, that the significance of her stories in relation to her total fictional output becomes less and less significant. Gordimer's main concerns are being articulated through her novels, and the stories become more and more the vehicles for individual thoughts and preoccupations. As stories, they do still function as highly crafted situation and character studies, and there is also a dimension of social and political analysis attempted through the realism of the better stories, but generally speaking, these stories do not articulate the central concerns of Gordimer as social commentator in the way her earlier stories used to.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A SOLDIER'S EMBRACE

The seventies was an active decade for Gordimer, and her writing achieved the highest international recognition. A Guest of Honour received the James Tait Black Prize; The Conservationist shared the 1974 Booker Prize, and in 1975, Gordimer was awarded the Grand Aigle d'Or. Burger's Daughter was initially banned in this country, even though it was internationally acclaimed. The stories that make up A Soldier's Embrace were written in the years between these last two novels, and were published in British and American journals between June 1974 and November 1977. A Soldier's Embrace was favourably and respectfully reviewed, even though, in the opinion of one reviewer at least, it was "in the genre of the novel that Gordimer has been extending herself, whereas the stories are sometimes doing very well what she has already done very well".[1]

Gordimer has made it clear that she regards everything she has written as part of one whole story - her own constantly changing effort to teach herself "how to make out of words a total form for whatever content I seize upon".[2] Thus A Soldier's

[1]Cherry Clayton, "Gordimer's new collection shows up her strengths," Rev. of A Soldier's Embrace, by Nadine Gordimer, Rand Daily Mail, 8 Dec. 1980, p.10.

[2]Nadine Gordimer, Selected Stories (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p.9.

Embrace must be seen within that context as continuing the process of making a further record of the interactions within African and South African society, and her apprehension of such interactions. However, despite the public platform she is often seen and heard from, the stories of A Soldier's Embrace are not predominantly public stories. Preoccupations within the private domain shape the majority of these stories, and the interaction of private concerns with their public responsibilities and implications is overt and more subtle than previously presented. Dorothy Driver sums this up when she claims,

> She has explored in the most thorough-going fashion the relation between the private and political self in a country with legislation and social habits that continually impinge on one's sense of individual being.[3]

The stories also reveal a readiness to experiment with methods of presenting fiction, a willingness to grapple with questions of form and structure of short stories, that characterised her early work, most noticeably the first three collections.

There are two broad thematic groups into which the stories of A Soldier's Embrace fall. One of the groups reveals Gordimer as the socially aware and committed writer that she had become in the sixties. Into this group fall the stories "Oral History" and "A Soldier's Embrace", and these two record the fates of two political types - "the black collaborator and the white liberal

[3] Dorothy Driver, "Nadine Gordimer : The Politicisation of Women," English in Africa, 10, No. 2 (1983), p.32.

in emergent Africa".[4] Also included in this group would be the two stories that deal with love across the colour-line, "Town and Country Lovers"; and finally, "A Hunting Accident" and "A Lion on the Freeway". In all of these, except for "A Lion on the Freeway", Gordimer achieves a fine balance between the private and the public domains in the story. The impact of these stories is enhanced by the dialectical tension set up between the victim as an individual, and the victim as representative of the public and political force and events of the time.

The other thematic grouping deals with the position of women. This is a change from the emphasis that Gordimer had placed in the past, yet entirely consistent with it. The women are presented as victims - of their own weaknesses, of the men in their lives, of their families, of the process of ageing. Two stories deal with sexual desertion, seen from the point of view of the women involved ("Time Did", and "You Name It); two deal with family failures ("Siblings" and "A Mad One"), with the woman as victim; and "The Termitary" is a metaphor in which the narrator's mother is presented as both ruler and prisoner of her family. It could be argued that concentrating on the role and position of women constitutes an involvement in the public domain. The growing feminist movement is bringing about a revaluation of the status of women in society. However, Gordimer's public statments on the feminist movement do not reveal any specific identification with the movement as such. In her view,

[4] Clayton, p.10.

feminism in the South African context is less significant than the issue of race. The emphasis that the issue of the position of women receives in these stories is primarily on their private concerns and only in a wider sense with the public issue of the status of women in society.

Of the thirteen stories, only one conforms with what this study has labelled the conventional structure of a Gordimer short story. In this story, "Siblings", the extended introduction gives way to a moment of heightened insight on the part of the central figure, out of which comes the final narrated conclusion. Four stories, while having a fairly conventional narrative situation, are given the innovation of being determinedly anti-climactic ("A Hunting Accident", "Town and Country Lovers", and "Oral History"), and three are monologues in which the self-realisation of the narrator is implicit, tied into the telling, rather than separately told. The remaining five stories are experimental, as has been noticed by Breslin:

> Several of the stories are experiments, attempts to break out of conventional fictional modes. The most successful, though also the least extreme, is the title story ... The other two, "A Lion on the Freeway" and "For Dear Life" take greater risks, giving up narration for evocative clustering of symbols and situations.[5]

This brief introductory survey is intented to show the direction of Gordimer's development as a short story writer, and the place that these stories should be seen occupying in consideration of her total output. They are less overtly political than

[5] J.B. Breslin, Rev. of A Soldier's Embrace, by Nadine Gordimer, America, No. 143, (1980), p.214.

her public platform would suggest, and they do not present coherent and structured universes, as do her novels. Yet they must be seen as giving a wider dimension to her writing, being, as they are, all part of the whole story. "To make sense of life; that story, in which everything, novels, stories, the false starts, the half-completed, the abandoned, has its rightful place ..." [6]

The narrative situation of the first group, those stories that deal with Africa and its social and political concerns, is generally treated conventionally. The treatment of tone, and the use of anti-climax give these stories a detachment that is markedly more apparent than in her previous stories. With this atmosphere of detachment - by the writer from her subject matter, the narrator from his narrative, the character/victim from his catastrophe - comes a feeling of the impossibility of redemption. No improvement seems possible; hope or dreams become improbable, and there is an almost Greek tragic inevitability to the working out of the stories. The limited point of view of the narrator produces a very narrow perspective within which the story can be viewed, a perspective which does not tolerate the possibility of redemption.

Yet the detachment of the narrator implicitly suggests a concomitant intensity of feeling - anger, outrage, helplessness, pain. The flat, 'offical' tone of the narration of "Town and Country Lovers" reveals, more intensely, Gordimer's outrage at

6 Gordimer, (1975), p.9.

the humiliation the girl suffers than any amount of direct explanation could. Hermione Lee has observed that,

> The stories' ironic tension between tragic circumstances and inadequate protagonists is paralleled by their marriage of detachment and intensity.[7]

These are dialectical opposites - valuable in themselves and arising out of the necessary alienation of the writer's identification with the lives of others, yet also a 'monstrous detachment from it'.

"A Soldier's Embrace" tells the story of a white liberal lawyer's wife in a newly independent African country. The story starts with the ending of the military phase, and concludes with the departure of the white couple to a country in the south still ruled by whites. According to Cherry Clayton, the white liberal lawyer is an easily identified type, and thus also too easy a target,[8] but this story's innovation lies in an experimental narrative structure, which is successfully integrated into its thematic material. The innovation concerns the treatment of time. There are two time schemes, balancing, yet thematically opposed to each other. The main time scheme is a chronological sequence of the 'deterioration' of the accepted western standards and amenities within the country, and it ends with the couple's final decision to move south to the white-governed country where the

[7] Hermione Lee, "Bending the Bars", Rev of A Soldier's Embrace, by Nadine Gordimer, The New Statesman, 16 May 1980, p.751.

[8] Clayton, p.10.

lawyer "would be able to uphold the liberal principles everyone knew he had always stood for".[9] The other time scheme centres on the wife's experience on the day of the cease-fire. She had been caught in a crowd of soldiers of both the colonial forces and the freedom fighters, outside the colonial forces' barracks. They were celebrating the cease-fire by fraternising with the 'enemies'. She is stopped by two soldiers, one a European conscript, the other a black freedom fighter. "She put up an arm around each neck, the rough pile of an army haircut on one side, and the soft negro hair on the other, and kissed them both on the cheek. The embrace broke." (SE, p.8). This experience is, in Joycean terms, an epiphany, and at irregular intervals in the sequence of the other time scheme, this experience is returned to, and enlarged on, and successive layers of detail, recollection and insight are unfolded. What is effectively revealed by this structure are the interior and exterior worlds of the wife.

The exterior world is a clearly presented, straightforward version of a white encounter with independent black Africa. The lawyer and his wife decide to stay on and continue their way of life in the newly independent state. They try to maintain their links with the black people they had known, but everything is changed, and they find it difficult to understand the new patterns of life. Then the problems begin - euphemistically

[9] Nadine Gordimer, A Soldier's Embrace (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), p.20. (All further page references will be included in the text.)

referred to as 'incidents' (SE, p.13), and the changes start affecting their daily lives. Their butcher decides to leave, and other supplies also start becoming unavailable. The lawyer finds he has less and less work to do, and he considers a number of other options, such as the Chair of Law at the local University, but, in the end, he gets an offer to join a legal partnership in the white governed country to the south, which he decides to take. They manage to bribe a contractor to transport their luggage and they make arrangements for their house. They leave, despite the pleas from their black friend, Chipande, formerly a member of his law firm, now a confidential secretary to the President, that they should stay. Their leaving constitutes a betrayal of their initial stance, and of their liberal principles, which have to take second place to convenience, standard of living, and the husband's privileged access to job opportunities in the white governed country to the south.

The other time scheme is simple and deals with the wife's interior world. Having kissed the two soldiers, she returns to her home, and in the days that follow, she often ponders on that experience. She remembers more and more details - the exact colouring of the cheeks she kisses, the skin, its texture, and the individual features of each man. She tries to remember what was being said at the time, and she calls to mind the minute differences between the men's fingernails. More and more she sees these details through 'innocent' eyes, with none of the characteristics being perverted by stereotypes and caricatures.

The theme of the story is interwoven with the two time schemes. The story operates on two levels. On the one, there is

the flight of the couple, the rationalisations that prompted the flight, and the attempts to justify it. Even though the narrator is not directly judgemental, there is clearly an implicit judgement arrived at - that of betrayal. "She did not know what to call out to him as they drove away. The right words would not come again: whatever they were, she left them behind." (SE, p.22). Along with her 'innocence' one might add. Yet on the other level, it is precisely that innocence which is revealed. She sees the hands of the soldiers with child-like clarity. What the story achieves is the parallel presentation of both these understandings - the betrayal and the innocence, the outer and the inner worlds. Both these responses are valid, and contribute in part to the schizophrenia of the white man's reaction to Africa.

"A Hunting Accident" is on the surface a hunting tale set in Africa, rich in the sort of impressionistic detail that characterises Gordimer's early stories. Christine, the daughter of a colonial Minister of Education in an unnamed African country, meets a photographer called Clive Nellan in Dar Es Salaam, and takes him to the country where she grew up to visit Ratau, the youngest son of the Paramount Chief. Nellan wants to photograph the tribal court, which he has heard is held each morning under the great tree in the centre of the Chief's village. However, Ratau, a confident, educated and powerful man, organises a hunting trip, and Christine finds herself and Nellan caught up in it. During the ride out to the hunting site, a rifle accidentally goes off and the bullet passes close to the heads of Nellan and one of the blacks on the back of the truck.

Luckily, nobody is injured. When they arrive at the site, the hunters all get their kills, except for one man, whose poor aim results in three bullets being used to despatch the hartebeest cow. Even the pointblank shot does not kill the beast immediately. As they wait for the hartebeest cow to die, "all decently turned away from its gaze" (SE, p.64), Nellan suddenly goes up to the beast, and starts taking pictures of the animal in its death moments. At the party that evening, Christine feels that she is being criticised because the hunting had prevented his getting the pictures he had come for. But he assures her that he is unperturbed. The next day, she looks for him, but finds that he has gone, having taken the early morning pictures of the tribal court that he had wanted. He has left a note for her, giving her an address if she wanted to follow him. She ends up watching the tribal court, feeling left out and not understanding what is going on.

Although the narrator uses Christine's as the point of view through which to tell the story, the significant figure is Nellan, the photographer. But all we get of him is Christine's view. We have access to her thoughts about him, but we never have direct access to Nellan himself. This filtering through Christine means that we have to infer the role he plays in the story. We have to be careful to distinguish between Christine's views and our own interpretations of his actions. Nellan generally goes along with Christine's suggestions - to have a shower together, to go off to Ratau's country together, to go hunting with Ratau. However, we do not see Christine as 'agent' because she doesn't control what is going on, and she sometimes

doesn't seem to understand fully what she does. She certainly initiates the action, but Nellan agrees to do what she suggests mainly because what she suggests are the things that he is happy to do. The first paragraph of the story ends with "He would not have the heart to reject her." (SE, p.56). This is what she would have said to herself, to boost her assurance, as reported by the narrator. It suggests uncertainty, and in fact, is seen later on as a pointer to the ending. There are two occasions in which Nellan reveals himself - in which he acts on his own impulses entirely, and these actions seem to penetrate to the heart of the story, and certainly to explain Christine's feeling of bewilderment and pain in the ending. From these actions come our understanding of the story. The two actions are, first, his photographing the death-agonies of the hartebeest, and second, his unexplained desertion of Christine the morning after the hunt.

Nellan is presented as supremely detached from and uninvolved in what goes on around him. While everyone 'decently' turns their heads away from the gaze of the dying hartebeest, Nellan goes right up to the animal to take pictures of its eyes. "He went straight up to the beast and, down on one knee, began to photograph it again and again, close-up, gazing through the camera, with the camera, into the last moments of life passing in its open eyes." (SE, p.65). Not only that, but he is unmoved by its dying. "His face was absolutely intent on the techniques he was employing." (SE, p.65). Nellan is the supreme exploiter - using whatever he can for his advantage, and giving nothing

beyond what he has to to achieve his own ends. He stays with the woman as long as he wants, and when he leaves, he simply reinforces the attitude which was revealed by his treatment of the hartebeest. Clayton remarks, "The camera's rape of a dying hartebeest cow looks forward to the photographer's own cool departure from the woman at the end of the story."[10]

Another type of distance is created by the peculiar moral detachment of the narrator. The narrator studiously avoids making any comment, or implying any moral judgement, even though the story is filled with moral issues. But, paradoxically, the texture of the writing itself, reminiscent of Gordimer's earlier impressionistic writings, allows a very close involvement by the reader with the narrative. Gordimer's narrator uses startlingly vivid images: "a great round, neckless head like a Benin bronze, bobbing on a vast chest" (SE, p.59), or "As a piece of rich cloth is grasped as one end and shaken, a shock was passed through the herd." (SE, p.63). Similarly, her perception of detail is cutting and precise: "Ratau with his cajoling African laugh and his ruthless Cambridge accent" (SE, p.58), or "no-one had known that these wild beings could link the abbatoir to the hunt, the slave to the free." (SE, p.64).

The two stories "Town and Country Lovers" concern the intrusion of apartheid laws into the private lives of individual persons. Both are about love affairs between people of different racial classification and both use a similar technique. Each story presents what is by its very nature a deeply human interaction, in such a way that it is stripped of all emotion in the narrative. Paradoxically, the flatness of the telling produces

[10]Clayton, p.10.

the most intense emotions - of outrage, anger and resentment. These outcries are rendered the more strongly because they are implicit.

"Town and Country Lovers One" was initially called "City Lovers".[11] Dr von Leinsdorf, a shy and reserved immigrant geologist, develops an understanding with a young coloured woman who is a sales clerk at his local supermarket. She starts doing his shopping for him, and then delivering it to his flat. After this, she starts doing odd jobs in the flat, and in the course of time, they become 'lovers'. The affair develops only in certain ways - von Leinsdorf teaches her to type, and introduces her to aspects of his life style, but no apparent intimacy beyond the physical develops. The story would seem to be gathering itself to a climax when the police raid the flat and arrest both of them under the Immorality Act. But this climax is not achieved; in fact, the whole ending is anti-climactic. The woman is medically examined, and detained for the night, as he is, and they are let out on bail, separately, the next morning. At the trial, the state does not have sufficient evidence to prove them guilty, and they are acquitted. After the arrest, von Leinsdorf and the woman do not meet, and although he provides defence council for the woman, the story ends with the reader feeling that von Leinsdorf has deserted her.

As mentioned earlier, the story's impact is achieved by a

[11] It was first published under the title, "City Lovers", in The New Yorker, 13 October 1975, pp.39-46.

tone of flat, impersonal detachment. Gordimer's purpose in adopting such a tone is to reflect the inhuman situation in which people are trapped by the perverted values and perceptions created by the apartheid laws. These laws turn love between people of different racial classifications into a crime. People thus are alienated from each other. When in the grip of such laws, they are stripped of their humanity and hence become things, devoid of emotions, feelings and personality. Hence, a tone which reflects this alienation and reification is entirely appropriate.

Gordimer's tone is achieved in a number of ways. Sentences are short and factual: very few adjectives are used. Very little reporting of the interior states of the two people occurs, and very little reference to their emotions - either joyful or painful - can be detected. The one reference to Dr von Leinsdorf's tenderness is when he says to her, "suddenly, kindly ... 'Don't be lonely.'" (SE, p.80), but it stands out the more clearly for being so isolated. The ending is a summary of police and newspaper reports, and so, being a summary of summaries, is intensely impersonal.

Yet the tone is also the result of the attitude taken up by the narrator towards the protagonists of the affair themselves. von Leinsdorf is an immigrant, and only superficially involved in this country and its ways. But even as a child, he is described as being self-absorbed, wrapped up in a cocoon of his own making. He doesn't seem aware of the provisions of the Immorality Act when he starts the affair, neither does he show any surprise, nor plead ignorance when he is arrested. None of his motivations

for starting the affair, or for continuing it, are given, nor are any of the normally associated emotions and feelings ascribed to him: elation, joy, anticipation, fulfilment. In similar fashion, the woman is objectively presented - we do not know what she feels about the dangers, or pleasures involved in what she is doing, and allowing to be done. Only once does she openly refer to the dangers of the situation and that is when he suggests that she stay the night. She is mainly concerned about her mother's reaction, and von Leinsdorf misinterprets her fear. "Her face opened to fear and vacancy he could not read ... The girl said, 'S'e'll be scared. S'e'll be scared we get caught.'" (SE, p.79). And there is a vacancy in the middle of the story, a lack of information as to the heart of the affair, which, coupled with the deliberate use of anti-climax, produces the tone of flat detachment.

The cold clinical description of the woman's medical examination evokes a sense of outrage far more directly than an emotional account could describe it. The success of the story lies in the balance maintained between the flat detached impersonality of the narrative, and the intense emotion evoked by that narrative.

The other story "Town and Country Lovers Two" widens the theme. Paulus Eysendyck converts his childhood friendship with Thebedi, the daughter of one of his father's labourers, into a sexual relationship when he comes home from boarding school. When she becomes pregnant, Paulus doesn't know, because he has already gone to a veterinary college. Thebedi is married to a

black labourer on the farm and has Paulus's child. When Paulus returns to the farm, and hears of the baby, he visits Thebedi and sees the child. He visits her again a few days later, and kills the child because it is clearly of mixed parentage. At the inquest into the death of the child, Thebedi, hysterical, accuses Paulus of killing the child, but at the murder trial, she has nothing to say that could prove him guilty. He is acquitted for lack of evidence.

The two stories contain parallels not only in subject matter, but in the use of various techniques as well. The same tone is employed, and similar devices, i.e. the reliance on court reports and newspaper quotes, are used to achieve the tone. There is also no reporting of the emotions underlying, or resulting from the actions, except that the start of the sexual relationship is described in strongly positive terms. Paulus Eysendyck is not a virgin - he has had sex with a white girl before this, but the narrator makes it clear that the experience had been essentially meaningless. "He had even met one who, at a wedding he had attended with his parents on a nearby farm, had let him do with her in a locked storeroom what people did when they made love." (SE, p.87). However, when he makes love to Thebedi for the first time, the experience is described as follows:

> ... he did with her what he had done that time in the storeroom at the wedding, and this time it was so lovely, so lovely, he was surprised ... and she was surprised by it, too. (SE, p.88)

The story shows how it is impossible for them to continue that joy, in the context of apartheid. Paulus can never acknowledge

her publicly; she has to be sure that her behaviour does not betray them. When Paulus hears of the baby, he goes to the kraal in daylight to see it. His prime concern is that nobody at his parents' house should see how 'coloured' the baby is. Apart from that, all he feels is self-pity. These reactions reveal the extent to which he is alienated from his humanity. The behaviour of Thebedi's husband, by contrast, is morally impeccable. He accepts and provides for a child that is obviously not his own. Two days after his first visit to the child, Paulus returns and kills it. Whether Thebedi knew what he was doing, and what she felt about it, is left unsaid. "She did not cry but simply sat, staring at the door." (SE, p.92).

However, the main difference between the two stories is that the second's principal characters are both firmly set into rigid social groupings. Paulus's world of white farm life and boarding school routine is definitely separated from the farm life and customs of the black labourers. Society tolerates a degree of friendship in children, but at a certain stage, black and white children must grow apart, each having to learn to conform with the requirements of his or her group. When Paulus and Thebedi do meet, it has to be in secret. This story extends upon the previous ones in that it is not just the effects of one law that are being scrutinised, but a whole set of attitudes engendered by apartheid society. The story emphasises the alienation and disintegration of the social community which result from apartheid laws. The ending of the second story is similar in technique to the first. It is highly condensed, selective and

emotionless, made up of summaries of law and newspaper reports. A comment by Paulus's father is both revealing and condemning. He finds miscegenation to be worse than murder - it is social opprobrium rather than moral guilt that is his primary concern. "I will try and carry on as best I can to hold up my head in the district." (SE, p.93).

"Oral History" is a sardonic account of a village's destruction in an unnamed African country. The setting of the village, its background and some of the emerging conflicts are revealed in the introduction. The central action of the story concerns the chief, who finds it increasingly difficult to reconcile the traditional customs and requirements of the tribe with the new demands of the white government, symbolised by the military presence in the region. A curfew set up by the military curtails the visiting between villages that had been a regular feature of village social life. However, the curfew is repeatedly broken by people who are training to resist the white government by force. The chief is often aware of strangers' faces in the village at evening times, and he is also conscious that the young men of the village are going away from home to train as freedom fighters. When the chief's mother finds out that the chief has asked one of his counsellors where his sons were, she reprimands him because he was not keeping a proper care over the sons of the village. In the hope that he will save his village from retribution for giving shelter to these curfew breakers, the chief travels to report the presence of strangers to the military one evening after a village beerdrink. When he

returns to his village the next morning, he finds that instead of curfew breakers only being arrested, the military have in fact destroyed the whole village with bombs and rockets. He hangs himself - but the village does not die. The people return later on and rebuild the village, and its history is kept alive by word of mouth.

Gordimer wrote the story as a response to a very short news item about a chief who had been found hanging from a tree after his village was destroyed in the war in Rhodesia. The story gives an hypothetical answer to the question, 'Why?', yet obviously this is not to ascribe any historical actuality to the story. That it <u>is</u> the truth, fictionally speaking, is easily apparent. What is it that drives the chief to commit suicide? The perimeters of the conflict within him are signposted by the following details: the conflict between traditional customs and modern demands symbolised on the one hand by the beerdrink, the burial service, the respect shown by the aged counsellor to the old chief, and on the other hand by the disappearance of the young men and the military presence. The chief's failure is suggested by paralleling two interviews; the chief with the counsellor, and the chief with his mother. With the counsellor, he has the advantage of the customary respect paid to a chief and he is able to imbue his questions about the counsellor's sons with some weight. When his mother asks him the same questions, he is able smugly to give adequate, but literal answers. His mother then indicates that the questions have other significance as well - i.e. the chief as a father to the village, and to this question, the chief is unable to answer. His mother says,

closing the interview:

> 'It used to be that all children were our own children. All sons our sons. Old-fashion, these people here' - the hard English word rolled out of their language like a pebble, and came to rest where aimed, at his feet. (SE, p.139)

After this, the chief is under an unspoken pressure. The strangers at a beerdrink force him into action. Before this, the chief had avoided the issue by avoiding seeing the strangers. "The chief seemed not to see one face or faces in distinction from any other." (SE, p.136). Now he tries to meet their eyes,

> the pupils with their defiance, their belief, their claim, hold, on him. He let it happen only once. For the rest, he saw their arrogant lifted jaws to each other and warrior smiles to the girls, as they drank. (SE, p.140)

This challenge leads the chief to the course of action which is a betrayal of himself, his people, his role as chief, and of all the traditions of the tribe.

Once again the tone plays a central part in the story. The narrator is an observing consciousness only, situated mainly in the black village, but able to follow the chief when he goes to the military camp; able also to understand the white man's behaviour in the interview, even though the chief himself is not. The detachment of the narrator is enhanced by his avoidance of emotion. It is only in the description of the landscapes that the writing becomes expansive. Even at the end of the story, the detachment is maintained. There is no moral comment on the chief's behaviour; the report of his suicide is an anticlimax, with more attention being paid to the bicycle than to the corpse; and the destruction of the materials that made up the villagers'

houses is soon negated by the return of the people and the beginning of reconstruction.

The last story of this group is "A Lion on the Freeway". While allied to the other five stories in theme and subject matter, "A Lion on the Freeway" is experimental short fiction using innovative approaches to narrative situation, and relying on symbols and evocative language to create 'clusters' of meaning. Made up of ten separate sections, it mixes together narrative and meditative passages to achieve its effect.

There are two streams of 'narrative' - a dialogue between two lovers in bed, and a series of interspersed reflections from a separate narrator on the sounds of a lion's roaring from a nearby Zoo. The meditative reflections on the lions generally, and on their roaring, is interrupted by urgent exhortations by the narrator to the unnamed companion to 'sleep'. The story ends with a dramatic metaphoric transference in that it is the black workers out on the streets, demanding freedom, rather than the caged zoo lions, which are disturbing the peace, "bending the bars of the cage" (SE, p.27).

The story concerns white South Africans' fears of what awaits them. The lion and the black crowd are conflated into one presence - and they threaten and disturb the whites' sleep of peace, or peace of mind. Both are caged now, but the roar of the lion still has the power to cause fear, as does the clamour of black aspirations. There are some neatly constructed oppositions in the story. The peace and quiet of sleep is disturbed by the restless enraged potential violence of the lion

in the zoo. Sleep is difficult and the nights are stale and unpleasant. At the end, the lion is replaced by the real fear of white South Africans, the gathering might of the restricted, encaged blacks, and the ending brings the two disturbers together, so that the implication of eventual dominance by blacks can be highlighted.

There is nothing new in the thought offered by the story that the blacks will eventually control South Africa. Gordimer had expressed similar opinions as long ago as 1959 in the essay, "Where do Whites fit in?" [12] What is new is the sophistication of the political metaphor, and the narrative technique used to achieve it. Although there is a linear sequence, a development along normal chronological sequence, there also seems to be a horizontal development. The two parallel sequences - the lovers' dialogue and the narrator's meditation - require us to carry both strands of the story simultaneously in our minds. The meditations interspersed between the snatched dialogue need to be seen as a developing sequence towards the climax (the unfolding of the political metaphor) and also as a simultaneous expansion of that central idea. The meditation is not only a set of steps moving upwards, it is also a continuing expression of the thoughts of the narrator, and these two different approaches are integrated in this story.

The second major group of stories in A Soldier's Embrace concerns the position of women, and more particularly, women as

12 Nadine Gordimer, "Where Do Whites Fit In?" The Twentieth Century, No. 165 (April 1959), pp.326-331.

victims. They suffer for a variety of reasons - ageing, the men they chose for themselves, the demands their families make on them, the demands they make on themselves. As John Thompson observes: "Women suffer deeply in these tales of Africa. But then so do husbands, fathers, sons, lovers, and they suffer largely because of women".[13] The ageing of women is seen by John Thompson as more than just the natural process - it involves betrayal as well: "it is hard not to feel that the grown women in Gordimer's stories are doomed to find that their own bodies and the men they have chosen (pretty feckless men, for the most part) will betray them."[13] The stories about ageing are not laments for lost youth as much as just hopeless acceptance of decay. The scarring traumatic experiences that the women have gone through, generally sexual, are not wished away, or escaped from. They remain constantly with the women, who hold no illusions about themselves and what they have been through. In the stories in which sexual disillusionment is specific ("A Hunting Accident", "Town and Country Lovers", "You Name It", "Siblings", "Time Did") and in "A Lion on the Freeway", which is sexually charged without being specific, sex is portrayed as an essentially transient and meaningless experience, stripped of the "emotional and moral matrix in which it is usually embedded."[14]

The other side of the disillusion projected by these stories is that the loss of innocence, often a feature of Gordimer's

[13] John Thompson, Rev. of A Soldier's Embrace, by Nadine Gordimer, New York Review of Books, 27 (1980), p.46.

[14] Clayton, p.10.

stories, is no longer, as it was formerly presented, a simple phenomenon (e.g. in "A Watcher of the Dead" and in "La Vie Bohéme"),[15] but is now a complex phenomenon often more felt by the character than actually understood. Coupled with this is a depressing absence of any sense or hope of redemption. The characters are trapped into their situations, and see no chance of ever overcoming the forces that restrict them. The tone of detachment mentioned already, and the dispassionate eye of the narrator who sees only the material reality, and is blind to other possibilities, deny any transcendent spirituality which could encourage the hope of redemption. Consequently, the stories portray uniformly a powerful aura of defeat.

Three stories, "The Termitary", "You Name It", and "The Need for Something Sweet" have similar structures. Each has a first person narrator, who is involved in the action of the story. Each story deals with the impact of another person on the narrator in some or other way. Each ends with a contemporary reflection by the narrator on the history that is narrated in the story.

"The Termitary" is structured around a metaphor which is revealed at the end of the story. It is a "very rich story: it opens up a vein of what Proust called 'involuntary memory', and the full remembering is meshed with the symbolism."[16] The story is set in a small town in South Africa in the 1930s; the town of

[15] Both these stories appears in The Soft Voice of the Serpent (1953).

[16] Clayton, p.10.

the narrator's youth. That environment is fully drawn, with spatial and personal details enhancing the aura of memory. Family life, the visits of doctors, painters and plumbers are described, with reference to the sights, sounds and smells highly evocative of childhood. The specific incident that informs this story is the visit of the termite exterminator. While the other workmen, such as the painter, Mr Strydom, would be treated as house guests, the exterminator was filthy and 'alien', and the distaste felt for him is satirically conveyed by the comment: "She served even the white man with a tin mug." (SE, p.117). When the exterminator finds the queen, she is brought to the kitchen for inspection. Again, the accuracy of the rendition of accent, "'S'e's full of ecks,' the white man said. 'They lays about a million ecks a day.'" (SE, p.119), is a touch of humour in an otherwise sombre narrative. The queen is regarded with a fascinated distaste, and the environment of the queen, the restraints on her, are spelled out: she is the "tyrannical prisoner of her subjects who could not have been born and cannot live without her." (SE, p.119). The parallels between the house above, and the domain of the termites below, with its galleries and passages, is often drawn. The power of the account comes from the wealth of description of sensory perceptions; the sight of the termite queen, or the feel of its obese helpless body which exudes a rich maternal elixir.

The story ends with a comment made in the present looking back on this incident of childhood. Surprisingly, Gordimer reverses what has become her general practice and she draws a

direct comparision between the queen termite both "ruler and prisoner",[17] and the narrator's mother. The narrator's mother had stayed on in the house long after the children had left home, gone abroad to what is presented as a vibrant and exciting life; long after her husband had been put in a home - until she too dies, and the house where they had lived, becomes like the termite queens's domain - 'sealed up, empty'.

The theme is clearly how woman's domestic role as mother and homemaker is an imprisoning one. Her husband handed over to her the responsibility of keeping the house, and she accepted this with the consequences that the story reveals. Her life is restricted to remembering the painter, the piano tuner, the white ant man. "Were these events the sum of my mother's life?" (SE, p.120), the narrator asks.

The next story in this group, "You Name It" has a ragged emotional edge to it that is different from most Gordimer stories. There is a bitterly cynical tone, and again, a feeling of betrayal - both by the narrator's ex-lover (he betrays her), and by her body of its passion for the ex-lover (she forgets him). The woman is the victim first of her own passion, then of convention, which ties her to her husband, then of circumstances when she leaves her husband, and of herself when she returns to her husband, and finds finally that her passion is only a memory. A lot of the resentment she feels is directed towards her daughter, who is the child of her ex-lover, and not of her husband, even though that fact had never been made public.

17 Eve Auchincloss, Rev. of A Soldier's Embrace, by Nadine Gordimer, Time, 11 August 1980, p.64.

It remains for her the final weapon she could use against her daughter and her husband.

The story is a monologue by the central character which ends with a present time reflection on the incidents of her life. As the wife of a colonial official, she had lived on 'the islands' (unspecified) where she had met Arno Arkanius, with whom she had had an affair. He has to leave for another posting, but she is pregnant with his child. He wants to arrange an abortion, but in the end she goes ahead and has the child, pretending that it was her husband's. The husband is pleased with 'his' daughter, but the wife misses her lover, and her general behaviour pattern changes. The child is a tangible reminder of her loss, even though her resemblance to her father very quickly disappears. She recognises what she is doing: "flirting and getting drunk at parties and quarrelling with my husband because he said I was neglecting the children." (SE, p.109). Finally she walks out on her husband and family and takes a job as an airline hostess. This doesn't resolve anything, and she goes back to her husband. He leaves the colonial service, but stays on the island when it becomes independent. He goes into private business and is very successful. Many years later, on a visit to Europe to visit his mother, the wife goes out to Nice where she loses the car keys. She phones from a public call-box, and on the wall of the booth, finds the name of her now forgotten ex-lover. She realises that she had forgotten the passion and the entire intensity of that affair. She realises too that even while she had forgotten, somebody else had been indulging in that same erotic fantasy she she formerly had.

The story ends with her reflecting on these changes.

> While this had been happening, I had forgotten, the baby with the big mouth had become my husband's child - it was true, I was deceived and not her, about her identity ... I had thought I was permanently unhappy but how could that be? ... There must be many children such as she, happy to be who they are, whose real identity could be resuscitated only if their mother's youth could be brought to life again. (SE, p.112)

There is a complex pattern of themes in this story. Considering the story from the point of view of the narrator, she is the woman who is a suffering victim, betrayed by her lover, and by her own desires and activities. Ageing has defeated the passion of her youth, and the excitement for her lover is replaced by a resentment against his daughter, and against her husband. The story is also about dislocation, and its attendant suffering. They are all dislocated periodically by the moves around the islands. "I was born on one (island) and married onto another and met the man who made her with me when transferred to this one." (SE, p.107). Nobody belongs. The husband is displaced by the lover as 'genitor' of the child, and the lover is displaced by the father as 'pater' to the child. The wife is displaced from her home and family, and then from her affair when the memory fails. The daughter is in danger of being displaced - which could happen if the mother ever did give way to her inclination to fling out the truth of her parentage. Finally, the mother is displaced from herself, having to live a life of deceit towards her husband and family.

The story also deals with the relationship of child and parent in the way the child 'becomes' the child of her mother's

husband, even though it was not he who fathered her. The ragged edges of emotion come through in the attitudes the mother adopts. The hostility she shows towards her daughter's activities - "walking out the door with her boy for a 'drive' (= to make love in the car; that old synonym)" (SE, p.106), reveals the tension between them - "times when we are getting on each other's nerves as only women and their daughters can" (SE, p.106). The unfulfilled longing for the departed lover, and the self-pity when she sleeps with the Canadian business man are further examples of this ragged emotion.

The third monologue "The Need for Something Sweet" is two stories entwined - the story of Anita Gonzales, an alcoholic, and the story of the young man who is infatuated with her, and of what happens to him as a result of his affair with her. At the time of telling, he is a successful middle-aged business man. When he knew her he was a young GPO clerk. The stories act on each other to illuminate the monologuist's central features.

The organising story is the speaker's story, in which is embedded his account of Anita Gonzales. The truth he draws out of his experience is something that Anita said to him, "You don't realise it will all happen to you." (SE, p.123). The tone of his account of his affair with Anita is vaguely yearning, but ironic. Even as he exposes her alcoholism, her lies, her evasions, he explains that at the time he had been too 'green' to be able to see the signs and recognise them for what they were. So the account produces an ambivalent response in the reader - we feel for his obsession with her as he as a young man felt it, but we are repulsed by his middle-aged clarity of vision that does

not allow us illusions about her. The acknowledged signs of his inexperience include: his failure to recognise the markings on her face (SE, p.12); the signs in her flat (SE, p.124); the drinking patterns (SE, p.124); the hard luck stories of the alcoholic (SE, p.125); the idea that he had that he could cure her (SE, p.127); his failure to understand how much she must have been suffering on the farm (SE, p.128). The result is that we tend to see Anita Gonzales as the middle-aged man sees her, rather than as the GPO clerk saw her.

The portrait of the alcoholic is the central component of the story. She is presented as attractive, sensual and demanding. Certainly the GPO clerk is infatuated with her, despite his growing awareness of her alcoholism. She is also presented as a victim of her unhappy upbringing, of her own weaknesses and as an alcoholic. Because of the lies she tells, it is difficult to know exactly what her upbringing was, but we can say that it was unhappy. She was brought up by her mother or an aunt - there is no mention of her father, so we assume there was little family stability. Whatever home was, she married at sixteen to escape from it. One of the central experiences she remembers is the cold bath (either with herself as victim, or her daughter as victim of her cruelty). Certainly the lies and deceptions reveal to the GPO clerk that

> drinking divides people up inside themselves - peculiar, it is - so that they become several different people, all different stages of life, in the one body. All these different girls and women in that woman put the blame on each other for what she was. What was done to her and what she had done were the same, to her. (SE, p.127)

The need for something sweet, which is what she felt when she was brought home drunk the first time, is reassurance, or some kindliness to offset her fears and weaknesses. What she receives from her mother is in fact the opposite. That reversal of expectations is what the GPO clerk comes to expect from life, as well.

The other half of the story is indirectly presented. While the speaker narrates his experiences with Anita and subsequently, he reveals indirectly aspects of his own character. He also reflects on himself, and what his life had meant to him. The first point - that of the irony of his account of Anita has already been dealt with. Secondly, the telling of his experiences is curiously flat - as if the emotions which had been there initially had been drained out of the remembrance of the experience. Despite his infatuation, he deserts her, and forgets her. He seems to accept the decays of age without protest, almost with indifference. He accepts as truth that 'it will all happen to you'. His tone denies any sentimentality (either to his wife, or to his employees) and ultimately he seems to be indifferent - a stark contrast to the fire of his youth. This lack of sentimentality is suggested by the use of words to name the various acts of sexual intercourse in the story. Gordimer's characters generally use euphemisms or formulae to describe intercourse - 'making love' or 'sleeping with' or 'doing it'. The first time he has sex with Anita, he uses the word 'fuck' (SE, p.125), but at the other times, when his feelings for her are stronger, he uses 'making love' (SE, p.128), and 'sleep with' (SE, p.128). So the coarseness of the word in the first

context matches what we see of his later character, and also gives an indication of what he thinks of the nature of the experience then.

When he returns to Johannesburg from the farm, he deserts her and starts taking up with people his own age. He marries and has a successful life. At the end of the story, he reveals in an emblematic parallel the state of isolation and loneliness that his life had become. There the old bull seal lies on the rock, alone, while all about him swim the other seals and the open sea. "And the seal lay, alone, mouth open - hungry, perhaps - I didn't understand." (SE, p.132). That he identifies with the bull seal is suggested by the image of their shadows lying side by side on the concrete. (SE, p.132).

The next two stories, "Siblings" and "A Mad One" will be dealt with together because they both deal with families that are unable to cope with their misfits. In both cases, the primary victims are women, and in each the failure of love and the lack of communication produce the isolation and alienation that creates the 'misfit'.

"Siblings" in some ways is one of the classic Gordimer stories. It is described by Margaret Daymond as 'Gordimer at her best', in an article which describes the collection as one which presents the "failure of relations and the recognition of isolation which comes to those who fail."[18] Its structure is

[18] Margaret Daymond, "Disintegration, Isolation, Compassion," The Bloody Horse, No. 4, (1981), p.91.

very similar to the structure developed by Gordimer in Friday's Footprint and Not for Publication. It consists of a passage of introductory material which gathers together the various insights and realisations into a central moment of intense revelation for the central figure, out of which comes the ending, either in the form of a comment by the narrator, or the presentation of an emblematic action. What distinguishes this story is the unusually explicit comment by the narrator of what it was that constituted the central revelation.

The siblings of the title are Patrick and Maxine, children of mothers who are twins. Maxine, three years older than Patrick, is a 'problem' child, having left home, taken up drugs, free living, becoming unbalanced and at times suicidal. Attempts have been made by her family to 'save' her, but at the time of the story, she is living apart from the family who have, to all intents and purposes, abandoned her. Patrick, who had been close to her when they were younger, sees her in a different light from the rest of the family, and the story is in part a record of his growing admiration for her individuality that had driven her to her then situation. Patrick, on holiday from school, meets her by chance in Hillbrow, and both are excited and pleased by the encounter. Shortly after this, Patrick and his mother take a birthday present to Maxine at her flat. When they get there, they find that Maxine is out, but by the time Patrick gets back home having dropped his mother off for a hairdressing appointment, Maxine had got the message and come to collect her present. The present is a skirt and shirt of Indian print material, which delights her, and she immediately strips off her

other clothes in order to put her new clothes on. Patrick studies her nakedness intently without her being conscious of it until she lifts her eyes and realises.

> She met him calmly, without bravado but without apology ... She had no shame for what she had done to herself; just as because she was so afraid, so afraid, she lived as others would find it too dangerous to live. (SE, p.43,44)

Then she quickly dresses and Patrick realises that he was seeing "woman's nakedness, all stages of change and deterioration, of abuse and attrition by pain, loving and unloving use ... " (SE, p.44). He becomes conscious of decay and indirectly of the reality of death.

What is most significant about this story is its position in a long line of stories that deal with the theme raised here. The loss of innocence that is the result of Patrick's viewing of his cousin's nakedness, and his consequent realisations, is a complex phenomenon, which represents artistically a significant advance on those earlier stories of childhood growth. The growth to self-awareness is presented in many of Gordimer's stories, but what makes this one so important is the accompanying respect for Maxine's individuality and attendant isolation.

> Like many of Gordimer's youthful protagonists, he is still without the deadening overlay of convention on which the adult world runs, and so he is free to see his cousin's behaviour more sympathetically, and as the story suggests, more accurately ... Through his cousin's determined refusal to conform, the boy is given an insight into beauty, courage and destruction. [19]

[19] Daymond, p.92,93.

Although the story's structure is basically conventional, it stands apart from the others because "a shaft of emotion falls across the story, and the boy is allowed a fullness of response not always granted to Gordimer's characters." [20]

The treatment of the theme of woman as victim is almost clinical. The level of intensity at which Maxine lived her life is revealed by the description of the scream which as a baby she held soundless in her mouth till she nearly asphixiated; the family's irritation as she followed her own inclinations and not theirs is presented as prelude to the suicide attempts, the visit to the psychiatric clinics, the drug arrests. The family's desperation, and the lengths to which they will pursue the notion of special treatment, suggest their failure to accept her for what she is. She is scarred by her own failures, both physically (the scarred wrists), and psychologically, but there is recompense in that she is able to face up to her cousin without being bowed or daunted by his scrutiny. She may be a victim, but she is not defeated.

"A Mad One" is also a story that deals with the failure of a family to deal with a difficult relative. The failure is again one of communication, and the victim is both victim and heroine - isolated from her family, yet at the same time exultant in that independence. The mad one is Ruth Harder, a widow, and the family concerned is that of her late husband's brother, Leif Harder and his wife Elena. The narrator deals with the story

20
Clayton, p.10.

through Elena, and its most innovative feature is that the story has a scene by scene construction - four separate scenes with a meditative interlude in the middle. The scenes are almost entirely presented through dialogue alone, and the interlude is a reflection by the narrator presenting the point of view of Elena.

The first scene serves as an introduction. When the phone rings at three o'clock in the morning, Elena tries to prevent her husband answering it, because she is embarrassed by the fact that he does not have his false teeth in. The caller turns out to be Ruth Harder, Leif's sister-in-law, who had called in order to talk to Leif about her son Vic, and his latest affair. When Leif does not show himself to be a sympathetic listener, Ruth puts the phone down on him. As Leif goes to the bathroom, after this call, Elena unplugs the phone so that Ruth will not be able to phone back. This action is symbolic of the central feature of their failure with Ruth. The second scene occurs the following morning when Elena confides this occurrence and its causes to their domestic servant, Agnes. The scene also contains an explanation of how it is that these two women can confide in each other. Three or four years before this, both of them had been confronted with pregnant but unmarried daughters. The response that each woman made to this crisis is indicative of their approach to life. Agnes externalised her trauma, and wailed and screamed, but accepted the child and now adored it. Elena had controlled herself, calmly arranged an abortion, and her daughter, now married, remains childless. The interlude deals with all the friends of the family who have problems - the bedwetter, the senile grandmother, the child who stole from

supermarkets, and so on. The passage is summed up in these terms: the problem person is seen as "holding everyone to ransom for a life he didn't have the first idea how to manage." (SE, p.99). The next scene occurs that evening at the dinner table, during a meal given for a Swedish relative of Leif. The discussion centres on Ruth and her problems, and everyone at table - the whole family, has his or her say. The Scandinavian guest is non-plussed by a discussion which mostly she can't understand until she realises the gist of it, and she explains her own family's relationship with their 'mad one'. This person is Leif's father's second wife's mother, who eventually spent her time decorating graves with flowers. Elena, in the next scene, in the bedroom after the dinner, recogises the extent of her failure to care for Ruth. They were trying to jettison the problem, trying to get the psychiatrists to solve it for them, or else just turn their backs on it completely. The action of the Scandinavian family made her realise the failure of their relationship with Ruth, and from this realisation, she appreciates the failures of all the other relationships that the story reveals - with her husband, their children, with Agnes the servant. This realisation is articulated by the narrator.

> A huge dismay slowly ruptured inside her quiet body. She was dropsical with it. Waters had broken, but not in parturition. She said a banner in her dark: we don't know how to live, do we? (SE, p.104)

The remaining two stories of this collection are experimental short fiction and they follow in the progression from "Message in

a Bottle"[21] and "The Credibility Gap"[22] and "A Lion on the Freeway". The conventional Gordimer stories were centred on a moment of high intensity, which was preceded by an introductory phase both in time and in terms of character presentation, and followed by a resolution of sorts. In as much as these three components exist, they exist within a predetermined pattern, even if in presentation the logical chronological order is overturned. The development of the story is thus linear. For the experimental stories, the effect is created not of linear development only, but of horizontal expansion, usually by the writer's attempting to present different events or sequences as though they were happening simultaneously, or, to be understood as happening simultaneously. So in "Message in a Bottle", although the three events occur definitely at different times of the day, the conclusion requires us to regard each as an expression of the same theme. In "The Credibility Gap", we are indirectly advised to see all the parts of the story as being involved in the present (by applying the message of the Levi-Strauss quotation). "A Lion on the Freeway", with its two strands of narrative, requires the reader to be conscious of this horizontal component as well, as does "A Soldier's Embrace", with its dual time schemes. The two remaining stories, "Time Did" and "For Dear Life" are the two most extreme examples of this

21 Nadine Gordimer, Not for Publication (London: Gollancz, 1965), p.176.

22 Nadine Gordimer, Livingstone's Companions (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), p.51.

experiment.

"Time Did" can be seen at one level as the sudden flashes of perception that surround two exchanges in a conversation between two lovers in bed. He ends what he was saying with "... and I'm between two girls at the moment", and she responds, "I know". This fragment of the full conversation encloses what the story contains, but the fragment requires us to hold all the material of the story within the very short time required to say those two lines.

Within the framework is a much wider domain. The structure is an interior monologue addressed to the lover, consisting of a series of discourses on moments or conversations regarding the relationship. The first half deals with the specific conversations about the two other women, and the second half is the recollection of the moments in which it might have been possible earlier to have ended their relationship. The monologue, a mental background to the conversation, reveals that she is aware that their long-standing, but low-level affair is ending. This awareness is triggered by the man's disclosure that he is "between two girls", and the woman recounts to herself, but as if addressing him, his own version of the two girls. As she does this, she also reveals the extent of her knowledge that the relationship is ending. Part of the story's strength is the subtlety with which the presentation of small events crystallizes the end of the affair, or the knowledge of its ending. These perceptions are revealed through body language as much as words. She had started her monologue in comfort: "I had been lying there close to you, resting in the

shore of your body attained ..." (SE, p.47). Later, she says, "As you spoke, you became another being" (SE, p.48), and ends with, "Although we had not moved from one another's arms, already - how quickly one adapts to the unthinkable - I had the instinct to avoid the tiny brown nipple in the hair of your breast. My hand knew already it would not seek you out again." (SE, p.50).

The second half of the story, the part that follows her "I know", is a recounting of the moment prior to this conversation when it might have been possible to have ended the affair. His mentioning the two girls makes her realise that the end has indeed come, and she becomes aware also of the changes in her, her physical ageing, changes which she knows reflect also his ageing, heralding the time to come when his flesh too will soften marking his death as a lover of women. The wider theme of women as victim is shown in the effects of ageing that she notices in her own body, and in the fact of his desertion of her in favour of one of two younger women. The morality by which their lives are controlled is too passive to allow any expression of emotions such as outrage, or disappointment, and this creates an aura of inevitability about the conclusion. This reinforces the sense of hopelessness that often lurks about in the characteristic tone of this collection.

"For Dear Life" is the most extreme experimental short fiction that Gordimer has published, so far. It is a series of fragments told from different points of view, not necessarily co-inciding or overlapping. There are ten of these fragments, and it is not always possible to ascertain what the connection

between them is. The first is from the point of view of an as yet unborn child "swaying along in the howdah of her belly" (SE, p.68). The second passage's point of view is outside the mother watching her as she walks through the streets watched by immigrant Arab workmen. The third introduces an older woman who is being addressed by the expectant mother, and who reflects on her own child-bearing: "... so long ago: ... plucking at one's flesh from within as fingers fidget pleating cloth" (SE, p.69). The fourth is largely from the point of view of the child's father and is a reflection on the sort of world that the child will inhabit. The fifth is an indeterminate point of view, but it is focussed on the mother. The sixth seems to look forward to the child as an adult. The seventh is from an old woman, past child-bearing age. "'I don't cry and I don't bleed.'" (SE, p.71), the eighth, the father, now, it seems, distant from the mother. The ninth deals with the Arabs again, this time dealing with one who contracted venereal disease - a punishment for "going with a white whore". (SE, p.72). The last fragment is again from the point of view of the unborn child gearing itself up to be born, to break out of the safe and comfortable womb into the world, "swimming for dear life" out of the womb. The ending is abrupt - a quotation in French which translated reads, "My mother farted and I was born in a pool of shit", and then the cryptic, "I begin again." (SE, p.72).

It would miss the point to try to find a narrative line in this story. The various reflections and insights attendant on the birth of the child have to be considered in conjunction with all the other points of view, including that of the Arab workmen,

dispossessed and seemingly forever alienated from the whole world of privilege and luxury. By spreading the narrative situation so widely, and by ignoring for the most part the conventions of chronological presentation, Gordimer requires that the reader absorb everything at once, and that the outlook of the reader must be wide enough to take in all the points of view. To a certain extent, the story defies explanation. Gordimer has commented on the story in the following terms:

> It's a bit like a Bunuel film, it could keep turning into other stories but it doesn't, but they're there, in that very short space, and then it comes back to the child in the womb because the child is born. You see, a story like that is something that really occurs complete, that's the kind of thing that I write very quickly, and that's the way to write it. All these complex things come flash flash flash flash ... and the story is there. That kind of story is very much something that comes straight from the subconscious, one that one mustn't think about too much - you have to let it take hold of you ... [23]

Generally speaking, there is nothing startling about the development of her use of theme in this collection. Race and a concern for Africa remain of central importance, but not overridingly so. She still uses the individual encounter to reveal aspects of wider patterns of social and political/historical systems, but in both these approaches, there is nothing significantly new. The two stories, "Town and Country Lovers" treat material that could have produced such

[23] Unpublished interview with Nadine Gordimer by Michael King, 11 January 1984.

stories at any time during the previous twenty or thirty years - the subject matter is not new. The tone is significantly different though - the spare quality of the words reflects accurately and concisely the alienation which the apartheid laws produce. The significant development of theme is her concentration on the position of women - and the theme of women as victims predominates. It occurs not only in those stories ostensibly dealing with the position of women, but in the Africa stories as well. This concentration on women represents an advance particularly in those stories that deal with the position of women in marriage, but also in those other stories where women are identified as victims of specific oppression e.g. apartheid (Mrs Bamjee in "A Chip of Glass Ruby", or Barbara in "The Life of the Imagination"). The emphasis changes from Gordimer's using the stories to make a point about apartheid, to her using these stories to make a point about women.

In matters of structure, Gordimer shows a new willingness to experiment with different forms, using new devices. This occurs when she uses entirely new structures ("For Dear Life"), when she modifies the treatment of time ("Time Did", "A Soldier's Embrace"), or point of view ("Oral History"), and in scene by scene dramatic presentation ("A Mad One"). In some stories, she reverts to the use of a more explicit ending to achieve maximum impact ("The Termitary", "Siblings").

The final point has to do with the variety of language usages that she shows herself fluent in. She uses the rich impressionistic prose that was typical of her earlier writing to

greater effect in some stories, while in others, she is able to strip language bare, leaving an outline that is flat, toneless and clinical.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOMETHING OUT THERE

Gordimer's most recent collection, Something Out There, made up of stories from 1979 to 1984, is in some ways the most coherent of all her collections. The title story, which is more novella than short story, was among the most recent to be written, yet its title provides the key to one of the unifying aspects of the collection, which is the predominant mood of nearly all the stories of 'something out there'; a sense of the unknown, the enemy, who lurks just beyond the borders of consciousness, ever threatening and ever ominous. Both in terms of the themes she deals with, and the structures that she uses, this collection does not advance beyond the limits established in her earlier works. The materials she uses seem more to reflect the current analysis of her society than to advance it, as had been the case with her writings during the sixties. She seems also to have avoided following the line of experimental short fiction which was developing in her writing during the seventies. Yet the stories remain, in the words of Sylvia Clayton, "sane, humane reports from the edge of darkness."[1]

The collection comprises nine short stories and a novella. The short stories in this collection are conventional in their

[1] Sylvia Clayton, "Saboteurs," Rev. of Something Out There, by Nadine Gordimer, London Review of Books, 5 April 1984, p.23.

structure and in their narrative situation, following very closely the patterns established earlier in her previous writing. Seven of the nine are related thematically in that they deal with various instances of betrayal, both in the public political world, and in the private and personal interactions of, for example, husband and wife. In both these areas, the stories represent a continuation of ideas that had been raised in earlier stories such as "Africa Emergent" (LC), or "You Name It" (SE). The contrast between the novella "Something Out There" and the stories seems to suggest that when Gordimer has something important to say now, the complexity of her analysis requires a format larger than the conventional short story, even a story of the kind that she herself had been writing. The novella allows her to merge a thread of metaphorical allusion with a realistic narrative yet keep the two distinct. The psychological insight of the extended metaphor reveals the neuroses and paranoia of white South African society while the narrative shows in part the nature of the real threat to that society.

The novella, "Something Out There", is the most compelling story in this collection. Its central structural device is the linking together of two strands - one allusive and figurative (the vaguely defined threat of 'something out there'); the other the specific and precisely detailed preparations for an act of sabotage. The scope of the story is thrown wide - many South African types are faithfully described in their idiosyncrasies, and the story brings all its multi-faceted components into one large scale map of white South Africa's fears, obsessions and hidden weaknesses. In the one thread of the story, the white

suburbs of Johannesburg are terrorised by an animal which evades capture and for that matter, description. It is seen by a number of people; a young boy who tries to take a photograph of it, but only manages to produce a picture of branches moving; a pair of doctors playing golf; a couple having an affair; a policeman's wife; a black maidservant - but all who see it can not give precise descriptions of it. It has a devastating effect on these people though. The Ratepayer's Association takes the matter of protection up, extra policemen are brought in to search the area, but all they manage to find are several illicit liquor sellers and fifteen men without passes. As more and more people see it, it becomes clear that it is an ape of some description, and it is finally shot after it attacked a woman in her back yard. When the body is discovered, it turns out to be a young, full-grown male Chacma Baboon, an indigenous species.

The baboon is used as an extended metaphoric device to show up the insecurities of South Africans and the ways in which they try to make themselves secure. The accounts given of the animal are various: it is described as "a wild cat",[2] "a viverra civetta" (SOT, p.119), "a vervet monkey" (SOT, p.119), "a black man" (SOT, p.126), "a baboon" (SOT, p.126). It is also seen as a spy, a private detective by the couple having an affair. When

[2] Nadine Gordimer, Something Out There (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), p.119. (All succeeding page references will be included in the text.)

it steals the leg of venison from Mariella Chapman, her policeman husband immediately assumes it to be a black man. Encounters with the animal always produce emotional reactions, and it is placed within a political context when writers from both the left and the right use it as fuel to advance their arguments. The left-wing writer "wrote a stinging article noting sentimentality over a homeless animal, while - she gave precise figures - hundreds of thousands of black people had not adequate housing ..." (SOT, p.189) while the right-wing commentator was irritated with "the animal lovers and conservationists who were more concerned about the welfare of a bloody ape than the peace and security one paid through the nose for ..." (SOT, p.189).

The account of the sabotage preparations is closely reported, with much attention paid to detail. On the day that the baboon is reported in the papers, a white couple, Charles and Joy, rent a smallholding for six months from Naas Klopper, an estate agent, choosing the one they did because of its isolation and its proximity to a power station. It quickly becomes apparent that they are involved in a sabotage attack on the power station. The other two members of their cell, Vusi and Eddie, arrive later, posing as black labourers. The various preparations are carried out by the four of them, until such time as the two blacks leave the smallholding and hide out in a deserted mine shaft for a few days before the sabotage itself. Each of the four people is clearly drawn as are the relationships and tensions between them, until after the sabotage when the narrator no longer seems to be able to account for them. What

finally happens to the three of them is left uncertain; the fourth is killed in a shoot-out at the Swaziland border.

Gordimer's control of detail is finely tuned, and in a number of places, her characterisation proceeds by setting up associations between the people and the artefacts they choose to surround themselves with. Mrs Naas Klopper is clearly a 'type' of noveau riche Afrikaner and she is first described through the household possessions that surround her.

> The rice was boiling in an all-electric kitchen with eye-level microwave oven and cabinet deep-freezer. The bathrooms were en suite, with pot-plants in the respectively pink and green bathrooms. The livingroom in which she sat on a nylon velvet-covered sofa had pastel plastic Venetian blinds as well as net curtains and matching nylon velvet drapes, and the twelve chairs in the dining area were covered with needlepoint worked in a design of shepherdesses and courtiers by Mrs Naas Klopper herself. (SOT, p.120)

Charles and Joy are described both through the eyes of Mrs Naas Klopper, and by the narrator, and we are immediately conscious of the two roles they are meant to be playing - the 'typical' young white South African couple, and the cover for the black members of their cell who will carry out the actual sabotage attempt. Vusi and Eddie are also clearly delineated - Vusi is the senior of the two, having already carried out at least one operation. He is portayed as a solitary, who makes a saxophone out of odds and ends while he is waiting. Eddie is the younger, extrovert and vital. He had left Johannesburg after the unrest of 1976, and while they are waiting for the right moment for the sabotage attempt, he jeopardises the whole mission by giving in to the impulse to return to Johannesburg again to

experience the excitement of the city and the people. At the end of the story, Vusi the professional gets away, but Eddie is shot at the Swaziland border. The characterisation in the other thread of the story is not as detailed, although the same techniques are used.

On a number of occasions, Gordimer introduces material which is only peripherally relevant to the story in order to make a comment on broad issues of her society. When describing Mr Naas Klopper, she introduces a short potted social history of South Africa as a background to the man himself.

> He was on the other side of the divide history had opened between the farmer and the trader, the past when the Boers were a rural people and the uitlanders ran commerce, and the present, when the Afrikaners governed an industrialised state and had become the entrepreneurs, stockbrokers, beer millionaires. (SOT, p.121)

At another point of the story, she juxtaposes an extract from a speech by the Prime Minister on the radio with parodies of the rhetoric of rebellion, and the overall effect of these intrusions is to place the fictional story within the historical context of present day South Africa. The description of Eddie's trip to Johannesburg does the same thing by allowing the writer chance to describe the metropolis through the eyes of one who represents the future. This dimension is an essential component because of the way in which the story is brought to an end. Unlike her usual fairly sudden endings, Gordimer gives this story a sustained historically based reflection as a conclusion. The narrator deals with the histories of the four saboteurs, concluding that, "Nobody really knows which names mark the

identity each has accepted within himself" (SOT, p.202). But the narrator shows how each is now a part of South Africa's history; that Dr Grahame Fraser-Smith, who saw the baboon on the golf course, also has his part in South African history, even if he remains ignorant of his own forebears. None of them knows that the mineshaft in which Vusi and Eddie took refuge goes back much further than the Kruger republic's mine diggings - goes back in fact before conventional history, or oral history into the realms that archaeology and anthropology explore, and the concluding sentence provides a perspective that Gordimer has used before - the notion that Africa has once belonged, and will again belong, to the black people of Africa.

> ... because before the gold-rush prospectors of the 1890s, centuries before time was measured, here, in such units, there was an ancient mine-working out there, and metals precious to men were discovered, dug and smelted, for themselves, by black men. (SOT, p.203)

Cherry Clayton sees this story as "an experimental straddling of the short story and the novel forms", and although

> ... the novella at first reads in a rather fragmented way, the closing sequence deepens the resonance as it works backward through white exploitation to an original African possession of the land. [3]

Although the story proceeds through two separate threads, much care is taken to ensure that the connections between them are held constantly in mind by the reader. When Mrs Naas Klopper's swimming pool is described, it is seen by the narrator

[3] Cherry Clayton, Rev. of Something Out There, by Nadine Gordimer, Leadership South Africa, 3, No. 2 (1984), p.141.

in terms of the swimming pool encountered in the other thread of the story.

> Outside, there was a palette-shaped swimming pool like the one in which Stanley and his friends, forty kilometres away in Johannesburg, had seen the face. (SOT, p.120)

When the speech of the Prime Minister is reported, it is the saboteurs who hear it, yet its terms could equally be relevant to the other thread of the story as well.

> This government will not stand by and see the peace of mind of its people destroyed. It will not see the security of your homes, of your children asleep in their beds, threatened by those who lurk, outside law and order, ready to strike in the dark. (SOT, p.149)

Once the sabotage has been committed, and its effects dealt with, the other thread of the story deals with the dead baboon - his threat to peace and security now over.

The stories that deal with betrayal reflect a prevailing sense of what living in South Africa entails. During the ten years before the publication of this collection, there have been many instances of betrayal which have resulted, among other things, in prison sentences for those betrayed. Among the more notorious incidents were those involving various policemen who infiltrated the student movements in the early seventies, and the ANC in the late seventies. There are other incidents of betrayal which do not receive the attention of newspaper headlines. The migrant labour system forces people to betray themselves, forcing them to break the marriage vows, their perceptions of themselves of human beings. Gordimer talks of a general atmosphere of betrayal affecting her, not of specific

examples.

> This is the subconscious of a writer living at a time when betrayal ... has become something commonplace ... It's also very complex because there are very many different kinds of betrayal. And clearly it became some kind of obsession for me, so that I was constantly exploring it from this angle, or from that angle.[4]

The first story in the collection is called, "A City of the Dead, A City of the Living". A black couple, Samson and Nanike Moreke are asked to shelter a terrorist in their Soweto home. This terrorist, Shisonka, had been involved in a raid on a police station, and he was waiting for an opportunity to flee the country. At first, he is passed off as a relative looking for work, then as having just been in hospital. He spends all his time inside the house, and so Nanike has the most to do with him during the day. His ways are different from hers - he has no children, but he helps look after Nanike's infant. He helps her with the housework - something that she is uncomfortable about. When the weekend draws near, he asserts himself by insisting that they do not stir from their house during the weekend, and that nobody should know or even suspect that they are in the house. This is against the social pattern of the lives led by Samson and Nanike, because there is a shebeen in their road, and people often drop in on them after visiting the shebeen. Nanike has seen him cleaning his gun during the week, and she is plainly disturbed by his presence. On the Sunday afternoon, she asks to

[4] Unpublished interview with Nadine Gordimer by Michael King, 11 January 1984.

be allowed to go to the shop to buy something for the baby - instead she goes to the police station and betrays Shisonka. The story ends with a reflection from her, claiming that she did not know why she had done that, and with a snubbing rejection of Nanike by the shebeen queen, who spits at her in the street.

The story is set entirely within a black context. Various features of life in Soweto are presented: the poor facilities, no electricity, poor roads, overcrowding - the house of Samson Moreke has two rooms and a kitchen and a garage in the back yard. The garage is rented out to a family (who play no other part in the story), and one of the rooms in the house is sublet to a female lodger on a weekly basis. The rigid codes of hospitality are invoked in order to secure a hiding place for Shisonka, and with it the continual fear of exposure - Samson warns his wife that it is better not to know too much about Shisonka "because then ... if they question us, we won't have anything to tell." (SOT, p.19). The nature of the betrayal that takes place reveals the tensions and potential conflicts within the black community. Gordimer uses conversations between Shisonka and Samson to refer to some of the problem areas, such as acceptance or otherwise of the Urban Councils set up by the white government, and to refer to problems relating to the schooling of children. Samson has sent his child Rapula to a mission school outside Johannesburg, and Shisonka urges him to bring the child back. He says to Samson,

> 'Bring your children home, man. We're shut up in the ghetto to kill each other. That's what they want, in their white city. So you send the children away; that's what they

> want, too. To get rid of us. We must all stick together. That's the only way to fight our way out.' (SOT, p.24)

The narrative situation of the story follows a pattern Gordimer has used before. The bulk of the story is told by a third person narrator, mostly from the point of view of Nanike. This point of view is enhanced by eight passages of interior monologue by Nanike commenting on various aspects of the people and the story. She reveals herself to be a not very perceptive or self-conscious observer. She finds him foreign and alien - she notices that he wears one ear-ring, but doesn't know what that signifies. When she asks him how many children he has, he just shakes his head, and she doesn't know whether this was a reply to her question or a comment on it. She finds that he appropriates her space - "He picks up the baby as if it belongs to him" (SOT, p.21), and she finds the perspective that he represents, with his foreign clothes and mannerisms something disturbing. She prefers him when he talks about the places he has travelled to - as she sees it, "Things far away can't do any harm." (SOT, p.23).

The title embodies a reference to the oldest city on the African continent, which has a vast cemetery, a city of the dead. Shisonka tells them of his travels there, and in Scandinavia. However, the title requires us to extend that description to include Johannesburg and Soweto as well. Because blacks are denied various aspects of life in South Africa, Soweto can be called the city of the dead. However, the meaning can be extended even further because if Shisonka is alive, then Samson in his passive acceptance of his condition is dead, and hence

Soweto itself becomes a city of both the dead and the living.

"Crimes of Conscience" is a story about the same kind of betrayal, but this time within a white context. Derek Felterman is a security police spy, who makes contact with a white woman called Alison Jane Ross because of an apparently shared interest in a political trial. In order to elicit her confidences, he starts an affair with her. It is the betrayal of this relationship which ultimately is the key that opens her privacy. Felterman has been recruited while overseas, and he has returned and established a cover story for himself. At the trial, he recognises Aly as a "type", the sort of person who might repay investigation. This intuition is confirmed when he finds out at the police station that Aly had served a prison sentence for refusing to testify in a case brought against a woman friend for breaking a banning order. Felterman feels that she might be involved "with a master organisation or back-up group involved in continuing action of the subversive kind the charges mentioned" (SOT, p.61), and so he starts spying on her. Their affair develops passionately, and she starts telling him a lot about herself and her activities, yet

> she did not seem to be able to tell of the experience what there really was in her being, necessary to be told: why she risked, for whom and what she was committed. She seemed to be waiting passionately to be given the words, the key. From him. (SOT, p.63)

It is only when he finally does tell her that he has been spying on her that she seems to 'surrender' herself to him.

The story relies on shifts within Alison Ross. Derek Felterman's reactions to what he is doing are never revealed, and

the reader does not know whether he is engaged in any moral struggle about his actions. It is only at the end that he does react, but even then the reader does not know whether that action is sincere or contrived.

> Her face drew into a moment of concentration akin to the animal world, where a threatened creature can turn into a ball of spikes or take on a fearsome aspect of blown-up muscle and defensive garishness.
> The moment left her face instantly as it had taken her. He had turned away before it as a man does with a gun in his back. (SOT, p.63)

The story concentrates on Derek Felterman, and does not explore Alison's consciousness. We do not know what she thinks or feels except from what we can interpret from her actions and reactions. Thus we may respond with an element of surprise to her reaction to his announcement, because the normal reaction, that of withdrawal, occurs for only a very short moment. In the light of his reaction to that, she moves towards him - which indicates her acceptance of him as a person despite the role he is playing. "She shuffled across the bed on her haunches and took his head in her hands, holding him." (SOT, p.63). The decisive move is towards him, not away from him, and from this we are required to perceive something of the nature of the relationship between spy and victim, both in the general sense, as well as in the personal.

Apparent in this story is the tendency that Gordimer displays towards setting up 'types'. The first comment about Alison Ross that the narrator makes is, "There was no mistaking her." (SOT, p.58). Both Alison Ross and Derek Felterman are first presented by the narrator as being easily recognisably

typical. However, what redeems the story from banality is the tension that Gordimer sets up between the 'type' and each seeming representative of it. She uses the story to reveal hidden features which give the lie to the notion of stereotypicality as far as her characters are involved. The questionable aspect of this feature is the effect this has on the reader's perception of the narrator. In most of the stories, certainly in this one, the narrator has access to a lot of information that is not revealed to the reader. The presentation of material is selective, and this has the effect of stressing the importance of the narrative presence in the story. This mediating presence between the reader and the action of the story is one of the strongest identifying features of the conventional Gordimer story - it allows Gordimer to comment on features of South African socio-political affairs; it allows her the sudden revelation of what has been called the "New Yorker" story; but it also prevents the exploration of more experimental forms of short fiction.

The next story deals with a different kind of betrayal - one in which the victim of betrayal is also the betrayer. This self-betrayal often arises out of conflicting options which bring an issue to a crisis, and from the crisis emerges the betraying choice. "At the Rendezvous of Victory" is the story of Sinclair "General Giant" Zwedu. Having been the military leader in a liberation civil war, Zwedu is 'betrayed' by the political leaders at the constitutional talks when they accept demands by the western powers who will be supporting the new regime that Zwedu be relegated to a position of relative unimportance because

he is "too powerful a reminder of a divided past".[5] Zwedu is successfully sidelined because he is an embarrassment to the government. He remains unwaveringly loyal but indiscreetly honest, and the government is embarrassed by his emotional outbursts in support of the ideals of the freedom struggle, which are no longer applicable in a state which continues to accommodate itself to its western allies. He starts diverting his energy to the pursuit of women and drink. The final section of the story is a vivid account by a journalist who had known Zwedu as a military leader, who sees him now in an airport lounge, gone to seed, disregarding all else in the pursuit of his pleasure.

The treatment of the theme is compact. Zwedu is both betrayed and betraying. He is betrayed by the politicians who relegate him to a position of unimportance, and in so doing, those same politicians are betraying themselves. Zwedu is aware of this - in one outburst to the press he is reported as saying:

> ... that the defence of the country might have been put in the hands of neo-colonialists who had been the country's enemies during the war - and he was powerless to do anything about that. But he would take the law into his own hands to protect the National Independence Party's principles of a people's democracy ... (SOT, p.34,35)

But Zwedu also betrayed himself by his surrender to the impotence of drunkenness and the pursuit of pleasure. The fall in stature is what horrifies the journalist most - and that fall is the

[5] D.J. Enright, "Which new era?", Rev. of Something Out There, by Nadine Gordimer, Times Literary Supplement, 30 March 1984, p.328.

result of self-betrayal.

The structure of the story is important in the way that finally the 'fall' of General Giant is presented. The bulk of the story is in reportlike presentation - told by a knowledgeable narrator as if it were already a part of history. This reportlike narrative reduces the dramatic quality of the story. It deals with summaries and the broad sweep of events. There are lacunae and assumptions scattered freely through the narrative, with little attention paid to particular details. Then the final section is presented - in the present tense, and very immediately realised: the chance encounter of the white journalist who, having known Zwedu in the days of his glory, is astonished by the change in him. As he notices the black man flirting, and fondling the woman he was with, the recognition slowly occurs, and the reader is forced, as the journalist is, to accommodate the picture of this self-indulgent hedonist with the image of the Coriolanus figure of the 'history'.

Similar in structure is the story called "Blinder". The reportlike presentation of the background takes up most of the story, and the final scene is powerfully and dramatically presented. The central figure is a domestic servant called Rose, and the story action is centred on the events following the death of Ephraim, the man whom she had been living with as his town wife for many years. Ephraim had returned to his tribal home to resolve a dispute there, and had been killed in a bus accident. This death allows Gordimer to examine the nature of relationships that the migrant labour system in Southern Africa inflicts on black people. Ephraim's wife lived in a village near Umzimkulu,

with her children. Ephraim lived in town with Rose, accepted by the white family who employ Rose, as her 'husband'. When Ephraim is killed, each of a number of relationships is decisively affected: his marriage, his relationship with Rose, Rose's relationship with her white family, the 'madam' and the white children, even now that they are grown up. Once this background has been filled in, the story proceeds in scenic presentation as, one lunchtime, Rose brings into the dining room, Ephraim's wife and children. She had come up to Johannesburg to claim her pension rights as Ephraim's widow. There is a short polite conversation, and something in the encounter decides Ephraim's widow that she will not wait for the pension, but will go back immediately to her village.

The story is a critique through fiction of the effects of the migrant labour system. Using the children of the white family as mouthpiece, Gordimer descends to the level of theory to clarify her point. This might be clumsiness on Gordimer's part, an attempt to make the point without using her normal indirectness or implications; on the other hand, it might also be a satirical allusion to the weaknesses of academic language to portray the human dimensions of the South African situation.

> As a socio-political concept the life is a paradigm (the grown child who is studying social science knows) of the break-up of families as a result of the migrant labour system. And that system (the one studying political science knows) ensures that blacks function as units of labour instead of living as men, with the right to bring their families to live in town with them. (SOT, p.84).

In another part of the story, the narrator, who plays a very

prominent role in this story, acts as mediator for Rose's account of why Ephraim had to go home - he was to be

> ... spokesman for his family in a dispute over ancestral land granted them by their local chief. Boundary lines have been drawn by government surveys, on one side there has been a new flag run up, new uniforms put on, speeches made - the portion of the local chief's territory that falls on that side is no longer part of South Africa. The portion that remains on the other side now belongs to the South African government and will be sold to white farmers - Ephraim's father's land, his brother's land, his land. (SOT, p.84)

In this way Gordimer is able to present for critical inspection the relocations that have been happening in South Africa. It happens more by way of its indirect effect on the urbanised blacks because Gordimer's experience of blacks is primarily with urbanised blacks, and so she does not venture to portray rural black situations.[6]

The narrative presence is very strong in this story. There are a lot of questions that the narrator poses, for the implied auditor of the narrator's account, or else directly to the reader. The narrator asks, "If dismissed, what kind of reference can be given her?" (SOT, p.81), or "He was going home because there was trouble over the land. What land?" (SOT, p.84), or even the implied question in the statement that is made, not by the white woman but by the narrator, "It is a delicate matter to know how to deal with Rose." (SOT, p.82). The sentiments are

[6] The only time she does so is in the novel, July's People, but even so, the main concern of that work is the effect on the white family of their dispossession and relocation.

obviously those of the white woman, but the utterance is not indicated as having come from her. The result is that the reader feels very strongly the narrator's presence co-existing with the story. The use of the present tense throughout also enhances the sense of the narrator's presence. Moreover, there are a number of statements in parentheses which come from a position of privileged access; e.g. "... Rose was in the laundry when one of Ephraim's brothers (as Rose says, meaning his fellow workers) from Cerberus Security Guards ..." (SOT, p.81), or "Can you borrow me ten rands, please madam. (This will be an advance on her monthly wages.)" (SOT, p.88). The narrator is commenting from a distance on the scene being played out before him (or her), even though the narrator knows the inside world of the scene being commented on. Because of this strong narrative presence, and because of the theoretical nature of the interruptions of the story, the tone of this story is more strongly didactic than most of her stories.

"A Correspondence Course" is the ironic title of another story of betrayal - but a betrayal more in the nature of one of Gordimer's earlier themes. What the course of action of the story reveals to Pat Haberman, the central figure, is the shallowness of her pretensions. Her reactions at the end of the story reveal her hypocrisies, and they reveal also the nature of her betrayal of herself when she fails to live up to the expectations she had set. Pat Haberman divorces her husband because she feels she has to distance herself from the "money-grubbing and country-club life" (SOT, p.104) that he was leading.

The narrator carefully shows the various ways in which Pat Haberman is careful to 'do the right thing' to keep in with 'the cause'. And Pat had made sure that Harriet her daughter was also properly brought up. "Harriet has been brought up to realize her life of choices and decent comfort is not shared by the people in whose blackness it is embedded: once protected by them, now threatened." (SOT, p.105). Harriet is carrying on a correspondence with a political prisoner as a result of an article she had published in an academic journal. The prisoner, Roland Carter, had initiated the correspondence which Pat is highly gratified by, regarding Harriet as having been given "a mark of grace" for having been singled out in this way. Pat uses the correspondence as conversational material which she thinks gains her special kudos. Roland Carter escapes from prison, and eventually turns up at Pat's home which, it is clear, he wants to use as a place of refuge. Faced with the reality and the tangible presence of Roland Carter, Pat's pretensions fail her completely and she is panic stricken with fear at the consequences.

> She locked that door, wanted to beat upon it, whimper. She went and sat on her bed, hands clamped together between her thighs. The walls that closed her in were observing her. (SOT, p.115)

She feels that she has <u>done for</u> her daughter and herself, and this reaction is exactly the opposite to all the expectations that have been built up surrounding her.

In structural terms this story is unremarkable. It follows the pattern of the conventional story that Gordimer had been writing, and the narrative voice is very similar to other stories

in this collection. The ending is unexpected and revealing, and the irony in the title maintains the sense of detachment that has become one of the features of her stories.

The remaining stories have a narrower perspective in that they do not contain any overt political comment relating to Southern Africa as the stories already dealt with do. Betrayal is still the key thematic focus, with two stories, "Terminal" and "Sins of the Third Age" specifically about betrayal of wives by husbands. A third story, "Rags and Bones" is about an affair between two famous people, one a scientist, the other a literary figure, which remains secret even when the letters between them are found and read. The last story, "Letter to his father" is effectively a literary essay in answer to Kafka's letter to his father, and consequently the same criteria for discussion as for a short story will not apply.

"Terminal" is a story of the betrayal of trust between a married pair. The woman has had a colostomy and the indignity of carrying the bag around with her, and of sleeping with it connected to her, drives her apart from her husband. She moves into another bedroom, and he understands her desire for privacy. Everyone, doctors, friends, her husband, sets up a pretence that all will be well within a specified time span - six weeks, or three months - but she recalls only the covenant between her husband and herself that if the suffering of one should become unbearable, the other wouldn't allow that suffering to be prolonged. Before she went into the hospital, she forces him to re-iterate the covenant. The consequence of her operation, the rubber bag, becomes overpoweringly traumatic for her, and she

takes an overdose of sleeping pills, leaving a note to her husband asking not to have her revived. The story ends with her waking up to find him holding her hand.

After her return from the hospital, she has to carry around with her the rubber bag into which her waste matter was passed. "It issues from her, from the small wound hidden under her clothing" (SOT, p.99). This small wound becomes symbolic of the termination of the 'wholeness' of her life. Natural functions now have become unnatural, and this drives a barrier between herself and her husband. The colostomy is never referred to by name, and euphemisms abound - to mask the reality which nobody wanted to face. Doctors, friends, husband - all conspire to bolster her morale by "the fairy story" that it will only endure for a short while. She comes to realise that everything has been transformed for her. All words have become lies, and everything which before had been meaningful now is meaningless.

> If she took his hand now, it was only in the lie of immortality. The flesh, therefore, was not real for them, anymore. (SOT, p.100).

Death becomes the only remaining verity, something which can not be betrayed, as life has now become betrayed for her. So, invoking the covenant, she commits suicide.

The narrator tells the story mostly from her perspective. The narrator dwells on her state of mind, and using euphemisms, becomes a part of the cushioning fairy story that ultimately, she has to escape from. The narrator never enters the mind of the husband, and so we never have access to his thoughts. We do not

know how he sees the choices that are facing him. It is clear that he is faced with the conflict between the covenant on the one hand, and his concern that she should go on living on the other. When finally he does have her revived (if that is indeed the case, because that is not made clear), the decision, although a betrayal of the covenant, is an affirmation of life. However, the story is aptly named because that decision will be terminal as regards the former nature of their relationship.

"Sins of the Third Age", also a story of betrayal of the fragile nature of marital fidelity, does not wholly succeed because there is such a wealth of detail which is not properly integrated into the unity of the story. The early life of Peter and Mania is rapidly sketched -

> Both are treated in taxonomic fashion, as specimens to be efficiently observed, identified and quickly, indeed somewhat impatiently, put aside.[7]

and apart from the repetition, for thematic purposes, of the sentences "they always had each other", the connection between the background and the essential conflict within the story is slight. They buy themselves a cottage in Italy as a place to retire to, and as Peter retires some eighteen months before Mania, he goes over to Italy to get the house and grounds into order. While there, he has an affair with a local woman, and then because he feels badly about it, he returns to Mania, unexpectedly, to tell her. He tells her, but only after they have made love, and she feels doubly betrayed. She finally decides that she will go

[7] D.J. Enright, p.328.

through with the idea of joining him at the cottage when she does retire, a year later, and she finds him distant, lethargic, passive. She suggests indirectly that he can continue seeing the other woman, but he tells her that the affair is over. When he finally points out the woman to her, she is dismayed further because they had been in daily contact with her at the bakery, yet "there had never been a sign of what had been found, and lost again" (SOT, p.77). The real betrayal is found here. "They always had each other" is the constant refrain describing their relationship, yet the affair ends that. Mania feels bereft, because that which had ended her relationship turns out to have been trivial and shortlived. There is no chance of a reconstruction of her relationship with Peter and she gains nothing from knowing that his affair is over.

In his review of the collection, D.J. Enright is critical of Gordimer's prose in this story.

> If "overheated" is a fault, "underheated" is not necessarily a strength. The prose - not too bothered about elegance or ready comprehensibility - resembles the staple of scientific reporting: "a childhood that one has not grown out of but has been exploded from the cross-fire of armies explodes, at the same time, the theory of childhood as the basis to which the adult personality always refers itself." The tale reads like an experiment which has failed to yield any results whatsoever.[8]

"Rags and Bones" is two stories, one embedded inside the other. The outer story concerns Beryl Fels, a woman who frequents auction sales and second hand furniture shops where now

[8] D.J. Enright, p.328.

and then she picks up bargains. She finds a trunk that will serve her needs, and having bought it finds that it contains three hundred odd letters from a man to a woman, spread over a number of years during the 1940s, revealing the sequence of an affair between them. After she has read them, she tries to establish their identities, and to find out about them, but although she can establish that the woman did indeed write books, she cannot lay her hands on any of them, and she is totally unable to identify the man, a famous scientist, in any way. The inner story, which is revealed at second hand through Beryl Fels shows the nature and progress of the affair. The woman is a writer, and many of the letters discuss characters from her books. The man is a famous scientist, who at one stage receives some signal honour for his work, but in order to preserve their secret, she is unable to attend the ceremony and share in his triumph. Equally, she is unable to dedicate any of her books to him. The last letter does not indicate any ending to the affair, which presumably lasted on in the silence. There is a note in the trunk which Beryl finds when she starts exploring its contents.

> These letters and documents are to be preserved unread until twenty years after the date of my death, and then are to be presented to an appropriate library or archives. (SOT, p.91)

The secrecy that was required to maintain the relationship endures in the circumstances of the letters. In one sense the secrecy is invaded; the letters betray that which was kept secret while it was happening. But more importantly, in the other sense, the secrecy is maintained because nobody will know who the

man was. D.J. Enright's conclusion about the story is apt:

> The story ends in a let-down, quite deliberately; how nice, especially in the present context, that privacy can be so easily invaded and yet secrecy still preserved.[9]

However, Cherry Clayton uses this story to substantiate a general criticism of Gordimer's "monstrous detachment". Clayton argues that this detachment can threaten the empathy that a writer needs to set up between the reader and the characters. She says,

> ... in exposing the intimate falsities of relationships with such harshness she leaves the reader very little basis on which to make the emotional and moral discrimination on which her satire should rest.[10]

She goes on to say,

> This is particularly evident in the story called, "Rags and Bones", in which a voracious and stupid woman finds an exchange of letters between two talented and successful people. Here there needs to be a distinction between the amoral greed of the collector and the emotions expressed in the letters. But if the love affair was <u>also</u> all vanity and illusion, as the scathing treatment of it suggests, then does it really matter if it is exposed to vulgar eyes? The price of Gordimer's detachment has sometimes been a general animus of tone which undercuts a necessary sympathy with her people.[11]

The remaining piece in the collection is called "Letter from His Father", and is a reply from Hermann Kafka to the "Letter to

[9] D.J. Enright, p.328.

[10] Cherry Clayton, p.141.

[11] Cherry Clayton, p.141.

his father" that Franz Kafka wrote attacking his father on various counts for the way in which he was brought up, and the nature of the relationship that existed between father and son. Hermann Kafka, now in heaven (although Franz is not), writes in response, assessing each of the criticisms and countering with observations, arguments and attacks of his own. It is not a short story, but an essay in response to the first letter, an essay in which a certain amount of fictional characterisation of Hermann Kafka is undertaken. Sylvia Clayton, although referring to it as Gordimer's "most adventurous excursion" is none-the-less critical of its overall effect. "Its style is stage-Jewish and the effect of its bluff reproaches is embarrassing."[12] D.J. Enright sees it as a "rather protracted and uncertainly parodic version of the Jewish mother joke transposed to the other parent."[13]

There is one story, called "Tourism", which Gordimer decided not to include in this collection even though it was published in 1983. Gordimer calls it a "sketch", and says that "it somehow hasn't the weight that the other stories have."[14] The story is complex, having as central characters a man who is annoyed by the assumptions and poses of the tourists in an art gallery, and the two tourists whom he attacks for their presumptions. After the encounter in the morning, the man sits at a café table in the

12 Sylvia Clayton, p.23.

13 D.J. Enright, p.328.

14 Unpublished interview with Nadine Gordimer by Michael King, 11 January 1984.

evening, and there follows two accounts of what the tourists are doing. The narrative situation spills over from interior monologue to narrative, even though the monologist is never in a position to be a third person narrator of the activities and thoughts of the tourists. The two accounts of the tourists during the evening seem to show two sorts of responses that the tourists could have made to what happened during the morning. Then the ending reveals that both accounts are imaginary anyway; the narrator says,

> That didn't happen, either. I take the freedom of fiction to follow both versions, I live neither. [15]

The tone of the story is harshly satirical. The narrator's description of the tourists is savage.

> All the callow thickheadedness, the obtuseness and fakery and vicarious pretensions of this era I belong in lit up its ultimate creation: those two blubber dolls setting themselves beside the Giacometti. [16]

The descriptions of the two people emphasise their fatness, their touristy preoccupations with photographing everything, the shallowness of their response to the art around them. Apart from this attack on pretensions towards culture, the story is slight. It certainly is very different in tone, intention and subject matter from everything else that Gordimer included in Something Out There.

This collection brings Gordimer's writing up to date in

[15] Nadine Gordimer, "Tourism", London Magazine, 23, No. 3 (1983), p.11.

[16] "Tourism", p.5.

terms of the contemporary debate of South African affairs. Yet the concerns that impel her into writing, as revealed by the nature of the stories that she chose to include, remain the same as those of her previous collection. Changes may be said to occur; politicians may claim that 'reform' is changing the nature of South African society, but at bottom, the society and the political system contained by it, are unchanged. The criticisms Gordimer makes through her stories now are similar to those made in previous collections. This is both a strength and a weakness. Gordimer wrote in her Introduction to her collected short stories, "My time and place have been twentieth-century Africa" and "part of these stories' 'truth' does depend upon faithfulness to another series of lost events - the shifts in social attitudes as evidenced in the characters and situations."[17] If the society remains unchanged as to its basics, then her stories will reflect that. D.J. Enright's conclusion puts this point succinctly:

> We must often have envied South African writers for having such strong subject matter at their disposal. Strong it still is, but less and less varied as the years go by ... Nadine Gordimer survives as a writer of distinction by virtue less of her themes than of her distinction as a writer.[18]

[17] Nadine Gordimer, Selected Stories (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), pp.9-14.

[18] D.J. Enright, p.328.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

This study of Gordimer's short stories was introduced by a discussion of the artistic demands of the modern short story. Having set the terms of reference, the study proceeded to examine in close detail each of the collections of short stories that Gordimer has published in chronological order, and those five stories that have been published in journals or magazines, but not in collections. The emphasis of the study has been on the development of the structure and themes of the stories. In the course of the study, it became clear that two critical approaches were needed in order to explain satisfactorily developments of structure on the one hand, and theme on the other. Thus, the basic approach has been close textual reading, which has been enhanced, especially after Not for Publication by consideration of the socio-historical dimensions as well. This conclusion will present the findings of that study.

While Gordimer always varies the structure of her stories to suit her particular material and her approach to it, it becomes clear that there was a development towards a basic structure that accommodates the sort of treatment she gives the material she uses in her stories. The analysis of the stories of Face to Face and The Soft Voice of the Serpent shows them to be organized in such a way that a number of organic patterns can be detected. The component features of these patterns can be labelled and thus

formalised, and four patterns can then be shown in the various stories of those collections. During the next two collections, Six Feet of the Country and Friday's Footprint, the structures used are seen to be combinations of the patterns that had occurred in the previous works. These blendings produce a much denser and more complex arrangement of the material, which is coupled with a better control over the narrative voice in the stories. The stories of Friday's Footprint are in one sense the highpoint of the development of the structure of her stories. The structure of those stories can be characterised as follows: The story starts with an introductory passage which sets the atmosphere, or provides the necessary background or characterisation. After this, the story moves into a passage of much higher intensity, during which a number of insights or implicit realisations are shown, which interact with each other to throw up, at a higher level of abstraction, the central or unifying revelation that constitutes the story. This unifying revelation might then be reinforced by the final section of the story (which has been labelled in this study, the emblematic action), which encapsulates in action or in a comment from the narrator, the central revelation of the story.

After this structure has been reached, Gordimer seems to have used it as the basic and characteristic structure in her stories that follow Friday's Footprint. This is not to suggest that the writing of stories becomes mechanical: rather it suggests that, being a product of her own experimentation with patterns, this structure allows Gordimer both the necessary freedom and restriction for the sort of analysis she offers in

her stories.

From this point onwards, the bulk of her stories conform with this structure. She does attempt some experimental short fiction - there are five or six stories in which she tries to evade the constraints of linear development in the stories in favour of a horizontal expansion. The stories attempt by manipulating the treatment of time, for example, to slow down time so that an entire affair can be presented between the exchange of two sentences between two lovers (in "Time Did", from A Soldier's Embrace), or by manipulating point of view by presenting ten fragments from scattered points of view, with no chronological signals to indicate the passing of time, to require the reader to assimilate all the points of view at once (as in "For Dear Life", from A Soldier's Embrace).

However, Gordimer is constantly alert to the opportunities available in the structure of her stories. She tries repeatedly to extend the limits of the short story, with varying degrees of success, and she exercises considerable variety in a number of other technical features which need to be considered as well.

There are a number of stories which rely on the manipulation of point of view for their success. Stories such as "The Catch" show how a sudden switch of point of view towards the end of the story can be used for thematic effect. The lack of sympathy that the story presents can be seen with greater clarity from another vantage point. Expectations set up through one point of view can often be overturned when the situation is viewed from another point of view. One of the best examples of this

manipulation is "A Wand'ring Minstrel, I" in Six Feet of the Country.

Another technical device she employs is the use of different ways of presenting consciousness for thematic effect. In "Horn of Plenty", the two women involved receive different treatment in the way their consciousnesses are presented, with corresponding differences of reaction from the reader.

Although the narrative situation of most of her stories is third person, there are some with a first person narrator, and some effective interior monologues. In a number of stories, an unreliable narrator is used, which has consequences in the matter of tone, especially the use of irony. Gordimer has used irony throughout her writing, but in her later work, it has a more consistent and pervasive quality. Her tone becomes more neutral as her narrators adopt positions of increasing detachment in their narratives. Her increasing reliance on implicit signals results often in writing which is characterised by understatement. The two stories of "Town and Country Lovers" are the clearest examples of her use of detachment and understatement as devices to suggest implicitly the intensity of emotion underlying these stories. Gordimer's titles invariably play a significant part in the way the story communicates itself. Often ironic, the title serves as an indicator of what is thematically central in the story. As the stories often rely on implicit presentation of meaning, the titles play a structural role in signalling to the reader what is being implied.

This list of technical features gives some indication of the variety and scope of Gordimer's craft. She starts as a self-

aware and self-regarding artist, and, accepting the constraints of the modern short story, works hard at extending the limits where possible. Even when the point is reached with Friday's Footprint where she can be said to have found her mature style, she goes on utilising technical devices and innovations to stretch her stories. Although she seems to have tried out experimental short fiction in the late sixties and during the seventies, she seems to have found it unrewarding and her latest collection shows her back on the ground she controls best.

Finally, it must be said that in the last resort, the short story is a limited form. The artistic demands place constraints upon what may appear as a short story, and Gordimer's special qualities of being able to capture the essence of a moment, with close attention to the nuances and minutiae of human behaviour stand her in good stead to use the form. Gordimer's stories consistently reveal a principle of realist fiction, which is that the individual encounter reflects the individual and his society in a process of constant interaction. The early stories certainly portray individual encounters which make certain points about the society at large. In the later stories on public themes, she continues to use individual encounters, but by Livingstone's Companions, it is clear that the emphasis of the analysis is more on the society at large than on the individuals that comprise it. After Not for Publication, Gordimer has to turn more and more to the wider scope and breadth of the novel in order to perform the sort of analysis of the African and South African socio-political order that her convictions require of her. The stories remain highly crafted and readable situation

and character studies, but her central concerns are being expressed through the longer fiction she turns to after Not for Publication.

The developments that occur in her treatment of theme are twofold: the choice of theme in the first place, and the changes that occur between stories on the same theme but distant in time of writing, in the second. The early stories tend to be concerned with a single theme at a time; the later stories start mixing together themes into much more complex stories. In the first four collections (i.e. up to Friday's Footprint), Gordimer's characteristic themes have to do with race, illusions and self-deception, childhood and marriage. In the stories on race, she is regularly critical of racial prejudice, especially when it is manifest in people of professedly liberal opinion. Racial difference is presented as being perceived as a barrier between people, either institutionalised, and coming from outside, or else as something internalised and coming from within. People lose their ability to respond humanely towards other human beings because of the particular South African version of racism, the institution of apartheid, in which is incorporated the complications of master-servant relationships as well.

The childhood stories deal with those moments which constitute turning points in a child's life, whether these are perceived as turning points or not. One of her favourite pre-occupations is with the façade of self-deception and illusion that people erect about themselves to protect them from

some of the unpleasant features of existence. Her characteristic treatment of this self-deception is to show up the façade, even if the realisation of the deception occurs more within the reader than within the characters of the story. Her treatment of marriage is equally unyielding. Most marriages in Gordimer's writing are flawed or failing, and marriage provides the context of conflict through which the characters reveal themselves.

Throughout these four collections, Gordimer's stories are inclined more towards the private than the public concern. However, after Sharpeville, and the reaction of the South African state to the first half of the sixties, a change occurs in Gordimer and she confronts the public issues of the day much more closely in her stories. Her growing awareness that the future of South Africa will be shaped by blacks produces stories in which she attempts to present a black context from a black point of view. The forcing into exile of many of her friends produces a set of stories that deals with the effects of loneliness, and alienation that exile creates. The growth of awareness in Gordimer of South Africa's place in Africa is reflected by stories in Livingstone's Companions which comment on the impact of Africa on Europeans, and vice versa, and the stories that deal with the interactions of white and black people in South Africa seem more concerned with the broader context of the perverting effects of apartheid on people, than on the individual people themselves. This development is continued in her next books as well, and the race stories show the alienation and detachment that the system of apartheid has produced in people. Humanity

has become dehumanised, and a paranoic fear of "something out there" sets up walls against the growth of justice, peace and harmony.

In her later stories, Gordimer although professedly no feminist, becomes more concerned with the role and activities of women. She portrays them as victims; of themselves, of the men they choose, of ageing. It is only in the last four collections that she starts using sex explicitly to reveal features of character. This explicitness occurs in stories about children going through the rites of passage from innocence to experience (as in "Tenants of the Last Tree House", in Not for Publication), or in stories about marriage ("The Worst Thing of All", in Not for Publication).

Finally, her latest collection of stories is overwhelmingly concerned with the theme of betrayal. The climate of betrayal has permeated most areas of life in South Africa over the past decade. The stories are not just about betrayal in a political sense; they deal with betrayal in marriage, and in other interpersonal relationships as well. People betray themselves as well as being betrayed by others.

Nadine Gordimer has been writing stories for over forty-five years now. The scope of her stories is vast, and as she herself suggests in the Introduction to her own Selected Stories, the stories reveal the "shifts in social attitudes as evidenced in the characters and situations"[1] of the stories. The particular

[1] Nadine Gordimer, Selected Stories (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p.12.

skills and abilities she has brought to her stories have resulted in some of the finest stories to lay bare the complicated realities of twentieth century South Africa. Not all of the stories work - the criticisms that Woodward made twenty years ago still reveal where her weaknesses can be observed. Yet as this study has tried to show, the sum of all her stories constitutes a profound and multi-faceted achievement - justifying her attempt (in her own words) "to make sense of life".[2]

[2] Gordimer, 1975, p.9.

APPENDIX

The following sets of tables of the date and place of first publication of her stories is included to show the range of journals and magazines which published her stories, and the frequency with which they appeared. The asterisk * indicates that as far as can be ascertained, the story was first published in the collection. The stories listed below the line are those which were published in journals or magazines, and then not included in the following collection.

FACE TO FACE

The Soft Voice of the Serpent	Trek	Jan 1948
Ah, Woe is Me!	*	
The Umbilical Cord	Trek	Nov 1948
The Battlefield at No. 29	*	
In the Beginning	*	
A Commonplace Story	*	
The Amateurs	Common Sense	Dec 1948
A Present for a Good Girl	Criteria	Mar 1949
The Train from Rhodesia	Trek	Sept 1947
La Vie Bohème	*	
Is there Nowhere Else where We can Meet?	*	
The Kindest Thing to Do	South African Opinion	Nov 1945
The Last of the Old Fashioned Girls	*	
No Luck Tonight	South African Opinion	Aug 1944
The Talisman	*	
Monday is Better than Sunday	*	

Come Again Tomorrow	Forum 2 (34)	18 Feb 1939
No Place Like Home	P.S. 2 (5)	7-8 Dec 1943

THE SOFT VOICE OF THE SERPENT

The Soft Voice of the Serpent	Trek	Jan 1948
The Catch	Virginia Quarterly	Summer 1951
The Kindest Thing to Do	South African Opinion	Nov 1945
The Hour and the Years	Yale Review	Dec 1950
The Train from Rhodesia	Trek	Sept 1947
A Watcher of the Dead	New Yorker	June 1951
Treasures of the Sea	Trek	June 1950
The Prisoner	*	
Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?	Face to Face	
The Amateurs	Common Sense	Dec 1948
A Present for a Good Girl	Criteria	Mar 1949
La Vie Bohème	Face to Face	
Ah, Woe is Me!	Face to Face	
Another Part of the Sky	*	
The Umbilical Cord	Trek	Nov 1948
The Talisman	Face to Face	
The End of the Tunnel	*	
The Defeated	*	
A Commonplace Story	Face to Face	
Monday is Better than Sunday	Face to Face	
In the Beginning	Face to Face	

Poet and Peasant	Hasholom 28(1)	Sept 1949
A Sunday Outing	Trek 15 (10)	Oct 1951

SIX FEET OF THE COUNTRY

Six Feet of the Country	Forum	Feb 1953
Clowns in Clover	New Yorker	Oct 1953
Happy Event	Forum	Nov 1953
A Wand'ring Minstrel, I	Harper's	Aug 1954
Face from Atlantis	Paris Review	Summer 1956
Which New Era Would That Be?	New Yorker	July 1955
My First Two Women	New Yorker	March 1956
Horn of Plenty	*	
The Cicatrice	Harper's	March 1954
Charmed Lives	Harper's Bazaar	Feb 1956
Enemies	New Yorker	May 1956
A Bit of Young Life	New Yorker	Nov 1952
Out of Season	New Yorker	March 1954
The Smell of Death and Flowers	New Yorker	May 1954

FRIDAY'S FOOTPRINT

Friday's Footprint	New Yorker	April 1959
The Last Kiss	London Magazine	Feb 1957
The Night the Favourite Came Home	*	
Little Willie	New Yorker	March 1957
A Style of Her Own	Cosmopolitan	Dec 1958
The Bridegroom	New Yorker	May 1959
Check Yes or No	Mademoiselle	June 1957
The Gentle Art	Mademoiselle	Nov 1959
The Path of the Moon's Dark	S.A. Pen	
Fortnight	Yearbook	1956/7
Our Bovary	New Yorker	Sept 1957
A Thing of the Past	Encounter	Sept 1959
Harry's Presence	*	
An Image of Success	Cosmopolitan	Aug 1959
Something for the Time Being	New Yorker	Jan 1960

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Not for Publication	Atlantic	April 1965
Son-in-Law	Reporter	March 1965
A Company of Laughing Faces	Mademoiselle	July 1960
Through Time and Distance	Atlantic	Jan 1962
The Worst Thing of All	London Magazine	Feb 1965
The Pet	New Yorker	March 1962
One Whole Year, and Even More	Kenyon Review	Winter 1963/4
A Chip of Glass Ruby	Contrast	Summer 1960
The African Magician	New Yorker	July 1961
Tenants of the Last Tree-House	New Yorker	July 1961
Good Climate, Friendly Inhabitants	Harper's	Nov 1964
Vital Statistics	Kenyon Review	Winter 1965
Message in a Bottle	Kenyon Review	Spring 1962
Native Country	*	
Some Monday for Sure	*	

LIVINGSTONE'S COMPANIONS

Livingstone's Companions	Kenyon Review	(No 2) 1969
A Third Presence	London Magazine	Sept 1966
The Credibility Gap	*	
Abroad	Contrast	Oct 1970
An Intruder	New Yorker	Feb 1967
Inkalamu's Place	Contrast	July 1968
The Life of the Imagination	New Yorker	Nov 1968
A Meeting in Space	New Yorker	April 1966
Open House	Encounter	Feb 1969
Rain-Queen	*	
The Bride of Christ	Atlantic	Aug 1967
No Place Like	Southern Review	
Otherwise Birds Fly In	*	
A Satisfactory Settlement	Atlantic	Jan 1968
Why Haven't You Written?	New Yorker	Feb 1971
Africa Emergent	London Magazine	Aug/Sep 1971

A SOLDIER'S EMBRACE

A Soldier's Embrace	Harper's	Jan 1976
A Lion on the Freeway	Harper's	March 1975
Siblings	Encounter	July 1975
Time Did	London Magazine	Nov 1977
A Hunting Accident	Encounter	March 1977
For Dear Life	*	
Town and Country Lovers One	New Yorker	Oct 1975
Town and Country Lovers Two	London Magazine	Aug/Sep 1976
A Mad One	*	
You Name It	London Magazine	Jun/Jul 1974
The Termitary	London Magazine	Aug/Sep 1976
The Need for Something Sweet	*	
Oral History	Playboy	May 1977

SOMETHING OUT THERE

A City of the Living, A City of the Dead	New Yorker	April 1982
At the Rendezvous of Victory	Mother Jones	Feb/Mar 1983
Letter from His Father	London Review of Books	Oct 1983
Crimes of Conscience	Index	Dec 1981
Sins of the Third Age	Cosmopolitan	Aug 1982
Blinder	Boston Globe	July 1983
Rags and Bones	Harper's	Oct 1979
Terminal	The Argus	Mar 1984
A Correspondence Course	New Yorker	Feb 1981
Something Out There	Salmagundi	Jan 1984

Tourism	London Magazine 23,3	June 1983

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